THE ESSENTIALS OF NARRATIVE: A SYNTHESIS OF THE WEST AND THE EAST

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Hence, if the problem be the discovery of a difference, we attribute no great cleverness to the man who only distinguishes those objects, of which the difference is palpable, e.g. a pen and a camel: and similarly it implies no very advanced faculty of comparison, when the objects compared, e.g. a beech and an oak, a temple and a church, are near akin. In the case of difference, in short, we like to see identity, and in the case of identity we like to see difference.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)[1]

There are many men who apply themselves to doctrines and methodologies. Each believes he has reached the unsurpassed point. Where is what was considered the Way of the Universe in ancient times? I would say that there are no doctrines and methodologies in which it does not exist.

Zhuang Zhou (ca. 369-286 BC)[2]

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[1] Hegel's Logic, Trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975) 171.

[2] *Zhuangzi Jishi* 莊子集釋, (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1961) 4:1065.

Abstract

This is a study on the nature of narrative in light of a narratological theory inspired by a comparison of narratives in the West and the East, and which tries to reach a deeper understanding of narratives in their particular cultural milieus as well as the nature of narrative per se. The macroscopic structure which the subject itself demands gives coherence to the study of elements which do not solely belong to narrative texts but nevertheless are essential for a text to function as a narrative. The essentials under investigation are the narrator's perspective (which gives a narrative its internal structure), language (which both enables and affects the formation of narrative), and the notion of genre (which plays a crucial role in the interpretation of narrative). These elements were selected after a consideration of theories postulated by Erich Auerbach, Northrop Frye, Fredric Jameson and Mikhail Bakhtin, as well as of the key properties of narrative as traditionally treated in Chinese scholarship on narrative. After the initial chapter, each chapter consists of a theoretical discussion on the main topic, followed by an analysis of a particular aspect of the subject as revealed in an American novel and in a Chinese novel. These subjects include the internal structure of narrative, fictionalization, the objectivity of language and the diversity of voices, the potentiality of language and the closure of narrative, plot and the ordering of a narrative, and fragmentarity and the perceiving of a narrative. In theoretical discussions, the essay challenges theories proposed by Wayne Booth, Michel Foucault, Umberto Eco, Stanley Fish, Roman Jakobson, Jacques Derrida, Jonathan Culler and Tzvetan Todorov. The major texts discussed are Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady, Luo Guanzhong's Three Kingdoms, William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, Cao Xueqin's Dream of the Red Chamber, Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia," and Liu E's The Travels of Laocan. The central idea of the research is to question such assumptions as made by Anthony Burgess in his article on the novel in The Encyclopaedia Britannica (15th ed) that "novelists, being neither poets nor philosophers, rarely originate modes of thinking and expression."

To my parents,

George K. and Helen Cheng

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Preface

To tell a story is to answer a conundrum in or about life. However, as a subject of study, "story" itself remains an enigma. Few will challenge the assumption that narrative is a major universal form which any given culture uses to build its canon, but many will question the rationale of this universality. What are the elements essential to the reality of narrative? How do they function in shaping a narrative? These are the questions I try to answer in this dissertation.

I cannot, of course, examine all aspects of narrative. The subjects I will address are the nature of narrative, the narrator's perspective, language, and genre. Different critical agendas stress different aspects of the same issue. I have chosen these four categories because I believe that they are the loci on which one may integrate the narrative experiences of the West and the East while exploring what comprises the essence of narrative.

The topic of this dissertation is admittedly ambitious, as the subject of each chapter could be the focus of a book-length study. What justifies the study's design is the fact that I cannot establish my point on any chapter's subject without referring to what I have to say about the other subjects. This essay actually is an explanation of the nature of narrative. In the first chapter, I try to establish some assumptions of what narrative is by examining the theories postulated by Erich Auerbach, Northrop Frye, Fredric Jameson and Mikhail Bakhtin in the West, and by discussing what traditionally were considered the key properties of narrative in Chinese literature. The subsequent chapters offer detailed discussions of three elements essential to

understanding the nature of narrative: the narrator's perspective, language and genre. My intention in these three chapters is to demonstrate that the narrator's perspective forms a narrative's internal structure; that language is the actualizing medium which both enables and affects the formation of narrative; and that the notion of genre plays a crucial role in the interpretation of narrative. While I have not exhausted all the essentials of narrative, I do believe that the elements discussed in this essay are essential to understanding the nature of narrative, and that what is most essential to this understanding is the connections these elements have to each other.

There are two assumptions I want to state at the onset, since they underlie my research methodology. One is the universality of narrative as a genre; the other is the particular ways in which the nature of narrative unfolds itself within different cultures. On the one hand, lack of a full appreciation of the narratives in a particular literature hinders an understanding of narrative per se; on the other hand, ignorance of narrative practices beyond the merits of a local poetics prevents one from developing a reasonably comprehensive or adequate narrative theory. Comparison is a way to cultivate a sense of the things that exist in narrative practice but have not attracted enough critical attention in either the West or the East. In this essay, when I contrast two literatures or connect a particular phenomenon to a particular literature (such as the diversity of voices to literature of the phonetic-alphabet language and fictionalization to the Chinese novel), it does not mean that I am trying to erect an impenetrable wall between these two types of narrative. What I intend to prove is that the development of narrative in a particular culture has its own peculiar pattern, and that some of its

attempts in this dissertation is to bring some order to the scattered meditations and observations found in Chinese theories of narrative. I do so by offering a comparative approach, rather than a historical survey or a structured summary. In this study, comparison is not used to extract certain commonalties of similar phenomena in different literatures. Instead, it is used as a conceptual framework in an attempt to prove that the effort to reach the nature of narrative in a scope beyond the bounds of any single national literature is indispensable for a deeper understanding of narrative per se in a particular literature.

This essay is intended for the Western reader. After the initial chapter, each of the following chapters is comprised of three sections: a theoretical discussion on the main topic, an analysis of a particular aspect of the subject revealed as in an American novel, and as shown in a Chinese novel. The novels I have chosen are all well-known. While discussing over-discussed works poses some risks, I accept this challenge in the hope that the way I approach the nature of narrative sheds new light on the interpretation of these individual works.

Contents

1. The Nature of Narrative: West and East

Narrative as the Object of Study: the Western Perspective

To single out narrative per se as an object of literary study is to attempt to reformulate the structure of literary theory. We know that a great portion of literature is comprised of narrative. While we once assumed that literary theory should be able to explain the nature of narrative just as it explains literature in general, this assumption has been challenged since the 1970s. There is something missing from the picture if we insist on seeing narrative just as we see other elements of literature. "The fact that narrative is so universal, so 'natural,'" J. Hillis Miller once observed, "may hide what is strange and problematic about it" (67). If we have difficulty explaining the nature of narrative, quite likely part of the reason is the lack of a proper analytical approach.

To start by describing the characteristics of literature in general, or that of a particular genre, is more a matter of principle than procedure. Narrative is a mode of thought and expression. It does not confine itself exclusively to literature. Part of literature is comprised of narrative. But only part of narrative is comprised of literature. Conceptually, in order to understand the nature of narrative, to view literary narrative as a particular aspect of narrative offers a better perspective than regarding it as a part of

literature. Attesting to this logic, critics increasingly come to consider the novel to be the most accomplished form of narrative rather than a particular literary form of expression.

The focus on narrative is not merely an effort to chart a new territory, a territory which may include other types of narrative besides the novel. Yet the novel is the form in which narrative has fully revealed its possibilities. Novels rightly hold the center of critical attention when exploring the nature and functions of narrative. The difference between viewing the novel as part of narrative and viewing it as part of literature is the perspective from which the novel has been studied. Recently the term "narrative" has increasingly secured its position in critics' vocabularies. This is not merely a matter of terminology. To begin with, to say that "this work is a narrative" is to emphasis its narrativity. It challenges the conventional way of interpreting a novel in accordance with certain general assumptions supposedly shared by various literary genres. It is difficult to judge whether for a novel being a narrative precedes being a work of literature or vice versa. However, it is not difficult to detect the difference caused by the shift of focus.[1]

[1] In The Nature of Narrative Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg claim, "the greatest obstacle to an understanding of narrative literature in our day is the way notions of value have clustered around the word 'novel' itself"; "in the middle of the twentieth century, our view of narrative literature is almost hopelessly novel-centered" (8). The de-emphasis on the novel in their work is associated with an effort to trace narrativity through a historical survey of various types of narrative. However, the study of narrative, it seems to me, could not and should not keep itself away from the novel, since the novel is a mature form, if not the mature form, of narrative. Like most scholars working in this area, in this essay, I will mostly use novels as examples of narrative. But the emphasis will be on narrativity instead of the so-claimed literariness of these works.

Methodologically, the emphasis on narrativity is meant to undo the grip of the conventional categorization. Conventionally, the study of the novel is strongly linked to two tendencies. On the one hand, some critics regard the novel as a supposedly well-developed manifestation of a larger theoretical scheme, such as a particular ideological doctrine, a theory of realism, psychoanalysis, structuralism or reception criticism. On the other hand, as one literary genre, the novel is considered a representation which reflects general aesthetic and literary principles requiring only local modifications. And these aesthetic and literary principles, by and large, are based on speculations on poetic practices, since unlike poetry, the novel was not a solidly established literary genre before the eighteenth century

Categorization is a way to integrate a newly-perceived phenomenon into the lore of critical wisdom. However, it finalizes our knowledge of the phenomenon within a pre-conceived system, and thus blocks further introspective explanations that demand a broader perspective. For instance, Rene Wellek, while a great literary critic and historian, sets up an agenda in A History of Modern Criticism, which can hardly supply a place for what E. M. Forster proposes in Aspects of the Novel. In Wellek's opinion, Forster's Aspects of the Novel is essentially a disappointing work, as he considers the novel a self-enclosed work of art (87). Forster believes that as a work of art, the novel should be studied as a "self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator" (84). This art-for-art's-sake postulate is part of what Wellek intends to criticize. Of course Wellek has his reasons, as there is no single novel that in some manner doesn't perform social and political functions. Nevertheless, instead of questioning what functions a novel performs, if we rather ask ourselves how a novel performs these functions, we may concur

with Forster and pay attention to a novel's internal order and external form as well as its social and political intentions.

A crucial step in rethinking narrative is changing the investigatory perspective. In this essay I shall focus on the elements that are indispensable for a text to function as a narrative. For it seems to me that if we don't know the properties that make narrative unique, it is difficult to understand how a text establishes and maintains its social and political relationship as a novelistic narrative, but not, for instance, as a poem.

Following this procedure, the very first question inevitably encountered is: What is narrative?

Narrative is a story delineated by a narrator.

A subtle difference between definitions we may find in dictionaries and this definition is the emphasis I place on the narrator. The American Heritage Dictionary , for instance, defines narrative as "a narrated account; story"; the Oxford American Dictionary, likewise, describes narrative as "a spoken or written account of something." These definitions, it seems to me, convey at least two misleading implications by not mentioning the narrator. First, both create an impression that a narrative is an piece of work which could be detached from the narrator; whereas in fact the narrator is always contained within the narrative. Secondly, "a narrated account" is a somewhat ambiguous statement, for the account could be narrated by either the author or the narrator, whereas the conceptual difference between the author and the narrator is a crucial point in understanding the nature of narrative. I believe that the narrator should be an intrinsic component of the concept of narrative. Even in a narrative where the narrator doesn't appear explicitly,

conceptually the narrator is always a restorable entity. This conceptual enclosure of the narrator is essential, for the appearance of the narrator implies the relationship of the narrator to the story and to the author.

Now, let us examine some major works on narrative in order to define the concept of narrative more fully. The works discussed are Erich Auerbach's Mimesis, Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, Fredric Jameson's The Political Unconscious, and Mikhail Bakhtin's Art and Answerability, The Dialogic Imagination, Dostoevsky's Poetics and Speech Genres. The choice of these works is not as arbitrary as it may appear. Auerbach and Frye's works are two of the most influential treatises on narrative and represent the two primary trends of Western literary criticism initiated by Aristotle and Plato respectively. Jameson's work is consequential in its own way, as it explores one of the most significant correspondences between narrative and reality: the relation of narrative to the political dimensions of ideology. Bakhtin's discussion of the rationale of narrative (the novel) is included because I believe it is one of the most enlightening studies of the nature of narrative.

In the following discussion, there are four concepts to which I will pay particular attention: the narrator, genre, the text and the diversity of voices. These are cornerstones of the theoretical paradigm I attempt to present in this essay. These four concepts are either the strong points of some arguments presented in the above-mentioned works, or such essential issues that the lack of their consideration exposes the weakness of the argument. It seems to me that a paradigm based on these concepts may enable us to deal with related issues in a different light from the theories we are discussing here.

Erich Auerbach's Mimesis is certainly a classic among the works that analyze the nature of narrative. Although it considers literature in the West

in general instead of focusing on narrative as the sole object of study, the texts Auerbach discusses are mainly narratives. These include Homer's Odyssey, Cervantes's Don Quixote, Flaubert's Madame Bovary and Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. While explaining the patterns that connect these works, Auerbach insists that there has been an evolutionary development in the history of Western literature. The goal of this development is to represent reality in its full dimension, which in Auerbach's opinion, reaches its apogee in Stendhal and Balzac. There are two reasons for this assertion. First, these two authors "took random individuals from daily life in their dependence upon current historical circumstances and made them the subjects of serious, problematic, and even tragic representation"; and second, "they broke with the classical rule of distinct levels of style" (554). There are also two consequences to these achievements. First, "they (Stendhal and Balzac) thus completed a development which had long been in preparation"; and secondly, "they opened the way for modern realism, which has ever since developed in increasingly rich forms, in keeping with the constantly changing and expanding reality of modern life" (Ibid.).

For Auerbach literature is a means by which human beings obtain and sustain the knowledge of reality through representation. Since literary representation is not as direct as the reflection we see in a mirror, there is naturally a problem about the medium that may either reinforce or distort the representation. For Auerbach stylization is a medium in literature that is indispensable but may distort our vision of reality, as stylization is not isolated from the social and intellectual milieu in which it emerges. Moreover, the formation of a particular style is prompted by the author's urge to represent

reality more truthfully. Cervantes created his own style because he found that "the phenomena of reality had come to be difficult to survey and no longer possible to arrange in an unambiguous and traditional manner" (358). Flaubert invented a new style to transform his realization of reality because he needed an omniscient viewpoint to grasp the fragments of reality in the way that God sees them (357). An underlying assumption in Mimesis is that the development of realism is also a progression through which the stylistic opaqueness of antiquity has gradually been transformed into the transparency of the nineteenth-century realism. However, if we look into this argument more closely, we find that the concept of stylization itself brings this assumption into question.

Stylization is a rhetorical bravura that seeks a compromise between the pattern of reality and the inherited style. Since it circumscribes the scope of reality, stylization interweaves itself into the reality being represented. In medieval literature the solemn and circumstantial style accommodates the effort to represent a stable, class-determined order of life. In the Renaissance, Rabelais's exaggerations, for example, provide him with a scaffold for presenting ordinary reality, such as that in coarse jokes and obscene stories, along with enlightened moral and philosophical implications. Therefore, the analysis of stylization projects a screen onto which we may view the relationship between two elementary factors: one is the author, the other is reality. However, in the case of narrative, if we look into the author's part more closely, we may find that there an aspect lying deeper than the issue covered by the concept of stylization. Although the author is supposed to be the subject representing reality, in the case of the novel the author never directly gives us his or her own version of reality. The one who gives the

account of happenings matter-of-factly is the narrator. The narrator is the author's creation, but there is always a distance between the narrator and the author. When we say that a novel is a work of imagination, the imaginativeness mainly consists of the distance between the author (who actualizes the perceptions of reality through the the antennae of the narrator's senses) and the narrator (who renders the story in a manner that implies all these have really happened).

Literature is an imaginative, creative art. It formulates ways to represent reality as thoroughly as possible; it also adds a dimension to the reality it represents. The tension between the reality the author is living with and the reality the narrator is telling carves a space through narrative. This created space enables the narrative to act upon the reader's imagination more vigorously. When historians compose narratives, they normally identify themselves with the narrators, in order to verify the truthfulness of the narrated events; in literature, authors purposefully play with the distance separating the author and the narrator, in order to carry the meaning beyond the mere representation of reality. One of the advantages narrative has in playing with this distance is the capacity to convey diverse voices within a single text. As Auerbach observes while discussing one of the European traditions in literary representation, authors have to deal with the background quality and multiplicity of meanings, besides dealing with the fully externalized description and uniform illumination (23). It appears to me that the "multilayeredness of the human problem" is the rationale for the development of narrative. In other words, narrative distinguishes itself from other representational verbal expressions because it accommodates the ever-

increasing awareness that a single voice, an isolated theme or discursive thought has gradually lost the power to handle the depths of human experience.

Although narrative has its representational function, representing reality is not its only function. There is a conceptual difference between narrative and representation. The concept of representation implicitly assumes that an unbiased observer is at least theoretically possible. Thus, there could be a uniform version of reality. In each historical epoch, the most approximate form of this version is offered by certain authors, such as Stendhal and Balzac in the late nineteenth century. These authors' personal attitudes and viewpoints have their merits in that they facilitate the effort to overcome the limitations set up by particular social and psychological conditions which impede achieving objective reality. In contrast, as one of its constituents the concept of narrative assumes a personal attitude or viewpoint which is sustained because of the narrator's existence. Along with narrated events, a narrative always contains a peculiar viewpoint to help the reader absorb the events. Since in society different persons always have different interests related to the same event, it is impossible to produce a scientific version of reality as long as the representation is made by a human being. The concept of narrative acknowledges that every representation of reality must be a biased one. Unlike the concept of representation that promotes the transparency of the subjective element, the concept of narrative maintains the subjective element as a positive power by which one may not only obtain the knowledge of reality but also learn the way to manage the experience of reality.

In Mimesis, the approach that identifies the narrator with the author

runs into difficulty when Auerbach interprets some major novels of the twentieth-century. In the chapter on Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, he strenuously endeavors to dissolve the bewilderment caused by the distance between the narrator and the author, concluding that, in this novel, "the writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished" (534). Instead of giving the objective information she possesses, the author adapts a "technique" which Auerbach names the "multiple reflection of consciousness." It is "the design of a close approach to objective reality by means of numerous subjective impressions received by various individuals [and at various times]" (536). Auerbach observes this method is also employed in Proust's Remembrance of Things Past and in Joyce's Ulysses. Auerbach feels that this method both accommodates the need to represent the unstable reality of recent decades and challenges the reader's capacity of interpretation (546), while it also reflects that authors of novels feel confused and helpless in this changing world and express their hostility toward the reality they are representing (551). Besides the issues Auerbach points out, there still seems to be some room for further discussion of this matter.

In Virgnia Woolf's work, showing the characters' inner consciousness still confirms to traditional representation. In her eyes, people's inner consciousness is as much a part of reality as exterior events. Although no author ever assumes the authority to reveal a character's thinking as he or she perceives things operating in the outside world, in a text like To the Lighthouse we can still conceive of a narrator who has the power to observe characters' mental activities. These activities are part of the world which the author is trying to represent objectively. However, since the focus of

narration in this type of novel has shifted from exterior occurrences to inner experiences, as Auerbach observes, "the exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events" (538). In other words, there can be different versions of the same event as seen through the eyes of different characters. Whether or not this has been done purposefully, the method of "multiple reflection of consciousness" has actually opened a narrative possibility. Just as characters in a novel always have mutually contradictory reflections while viewing the same outside world, in the real world it is impossible for anyone to obtain a god-like objectivity about actual events. In this view, why should an author have the privilege to formulate an indisputably objective version of the world? After Woolf, some writers like William Faulkner pushed the development of the novel even further by exploring the potentiality of narrative. Instead of relying on multiple consciousness of characters, in Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner relies on the differentiation between the author and the narrator, and employs multiple narrators, in order to reinforce the awareness that the universally applicable version of the factual reality is only a fiction of theoretical reasoning.

The tenets presented by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism are theoretically opposed to those in Auerbach's Mimesis. Frye states explicitly that he dislikes the "inept term" of realism (140). He observes that "in literature the standards of outward meaning are secondary" (74), and that "one of the most familiar and important features of literature is the absence of a controlling aim of descriptive accuracy" (75). If Auerbach's emphasis on representation follows the tradition of "mimesis" proposed by Aristotle, the scheme Frye intends to set forth is framed within the larger picture combined

in Plato's treatment of poetry in Phaedrus, Symposium, Republic (at the end) and Cratylus (65). For Frye, the essence of literature is not its allegiance to reality but is fictionality. In Anatomy of Criticism Frye declares that his intention is to provide a conceptual framework for literary criticism as its new ground. This framework is commonly called archetypal.

Frye considers literature to be a language. Like mathematics, it is "a language [that] in itself represents no truth, though it may provide the means for expressing any number of them" (354). Also like mathematics, it maintains that certain preconceived categories, such as "poem" and "epic," are key concepts to regulate the reader's imagination. A reader sees a composition as a poem or a novel mainly because he or she already has the concepts of poem and novel in mind. In Frye's opinion, these concepts are established by the tradition of Christian literature and by literary classics, and are bolstered by social conventions. Every literary work is intended to reinforce the conceptual power carried by the notion of literature. Thus, "the real difference between the original and the imitative poet is simply that the former is more profoundly imitative" (97).

Fostered by the Christian tradition and literary classics, for Frye myth has created an image of the universal man's general mentality. The fictional hero thus turns out to be the central figure which constitutes the essence of literature. The fictionality embodied by the hero is the ground on which Frye builds his system of classification among myth, romance, the low and high mimetic modes, and the ironic mode (33-34). Frye observes that there are two poles in literature. One is the tendency to start with facts and pursue descriptive accuracy. The other tendency starts with legendary and mythical characters, and "only gradually becomes attracted toward a tendency to tell a

plausible or credible story" (51). A literary work is a compromise between these two polar tendencies. Therefore, Frye employs "hypothetical" instead of "imaginative" to define the meaning of a literary work (74). In other words, literary meaning not only relies on the description of the outside world, whether it be a factual or imaginative version, but also partakes of preconceived notions about reality, in both the mind of the author and the mind of the reader. In Frye's own words, "what we have now is a conception of literature as a body of hypothetical creations which is not necessarily involved in the worlds of truth and fact, nor necessarily withdrawn from them, but which may enter into any kind of relationship to them, ranging from the most to the least explicit" (92-93).

Frye believes that literature is one of the means by which we positively participate in the world and that the major function of a literary work stems from its form rather than its content. He declares that "literature is a specialized form of language" (74), and that "the true father or shaping spirit of the poem is the form of the poem itself, and this form is a manifestation of the universal spirit of poetry" (98). Form is the heart of literature. Although literature certainly has its content, such as life, reality, experience, nature, imaginative truth, social conditions, "literature itself is not made out of these things" (97). Literature shapes itself through its inherited forms. In this sense, every piece of poetry is a center of the literary universe, since it assumes the form that gives literature its life. "One step further, and the poem appears as a microcosm of all literature, an individual manifestation of the total order of words" (121). Forms embody the development of civilization and enable people to liberate themselves from nature (105). Fyre tells us that the

aim of Anatomy is thus "to give a rational account of some of the structural principles of Western literature in the context of its Classical and Christian heritage" (133).

Frye points out that with every reading experience we simultaneously appropriate two modes of understanding. On the one hand, our attention is drawn to an outward or centrifugal direction, in which we keep looking for the meaning symbolized by language signs. On the other hand, our concentration on verbal patterns is also drawn to an inward or centripetal direction, in which we keep looking for the messages embedded in the verbal patterns themselves. What decides the nature of a particular piece of writing is the "final" direction of its verbal structure: "In all literary verbal structures the final direction of meaning is inward." In other words, in literature the referential reality has no primary significance. "In literature, questions of fact or truth are subordinated to the primary literary aim of producing a structure of words for its own sake." The "autonomous verbal structure" is the exclusive standard by which we judge whether or not a piece of writing is a work of literature (73-74). In each mode of literature, the autonomous verbal structures are characterized as certain formal features. The notion of genre is based on these classifications of form (95). Genre is a concept related to specific kinds of verbal structures (246). Therefore, form is the internal basis of literature, and studying genre is the only way to place an individual work in the body of literature as a whole.

Frye's archetypal theory is closely related to his emphatic conclusion about the function of literary forms. Archetype is a symbolic image which bears a certain conventionalized meaning and "thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience" (99). It is a result of "the process of making

a human form out of nature," and is "usually a natural object with a human meaning" (112-13). It is typical because of its recurrence. With the concept of archetype Frye envisions an integration between the human experience of social facts and the formal mode of this expression. However, since normally the symbolic meaning of an archetype is conventionally fixed, in the process of communication the archetypal images eventually transform themselves into certain forms of common experiences in a shared civilization. Authors rely on archetypes to organize intended messages in perceptible forms. In Frye's own words, "the archetypal view of literature shows us literature as a total form and literary experience as a part of the continuum of life, in which one of the poet's functions is to visualize the goals of human work" (115).

Frye's speculation about narrative supports his ruminations on the nature of literature. For Frye, in our lives we inevitably encounter three worlds: the natural, human and spiritual worlds, with the human world standing between the other two. The controlling pattern that ontologically connects these three worlds into a unified entity is fundamental form of process shared by all three. It is "the rhythm of process,' "the cyclical movement," "the alternation of success and decline, effort and repose, life and death" (158). The human world reflects its dual connection to both the spiritual and the animal worlds in its cyclical rhythms (159). Narrative is a way to imitate this rhythmical movement.

Frye writes, "the word narrative or *mythos* conveys the sense of movement caught by the ear" (77). It is a concept which contrasts to that of meaning, as "narrative involves movement from one structure to another" (158). "A poem's narrative is its rhythm or movement of words" (78). There

are two implications in the notion of movement involved in narrative. First, "in the literal phase, narrative is a flow of significant sounds" (104). Second, narrative is grammar, the syntax which properly orders words (244). Whether it be a string of sounds or grammar, narrative has to combine with meaning or logic (the art of producing meaning) in order to carry out its communicative function.

Frye relies on ritual to accentuate the significance of narrative. "Narrative," he states, "is studied by the archetypal critic as ritual or imitation of human action as a whole, and not simply as *mimesis praxeos* or imitation of *an* action" (105, the author's italics). In other words, narrative represents the human world through its rhythmical form which crystallizes the significance of individual actions, instead of the individual actions themselves. It is therefore a "recurrent act of symbolic communication: in other words a ritual" (ibid.). And ritual is "a half-involuntary imitation of organic rhythms or processes" (344). In short, in Frye's theory narrative is a communicative form that via human imitation connects to the rhythmical movement of the universal chain, and facilitates the act of conveying intended meaning by the sympathy of the natural impulse.

Therefore, it is obvious that genre occupies a central position in Frye's Anatomy, and his discussion of genre has indeed inspired many critical discussions. Yet if we pursue this line of inquiry into the nature of narrative, we may find some issues related to the notion of genre which are still begging for further elaboration.

As Frye points out, a verbal structure enters into the body of literature by securing a specific position in the extant generic system. Genre gives literature the formative power with which to hold its own territory. Over

generations, each genre and its particular formal characteristics have acquired a particular accent. To adopt a particular generic form is to organize one's experience in a peculiar and purposeful way. In this sense, form itself is able to convey the author's attitude and intention to the reader. Since it is genre that differentiates literary works from other "verbal structures," it requires no special effort to conclude that literature is genre-fenced rather than language-fenced. However, in this regard, Fry contradicts his own notion of genre: he defines narrative as "a flow of significant sounds" (104), and this definition is obviously modeled on a linguistic rather than a generic level.

Narrative has its own generic characteristics, such as plotting, characterization and point of view. However, these characteristics are derived from the very definition mentioned above--that narrative is a story told by a narrator. The existence of the narrator establishes a center to which all narrations are attached. In other words, the sensation, perception, imagination and thinking of the narrator circumscribes a space that enables the reader's faculties to function on the perceptive ground. Unlike a scientific essay, in a narrative the relation of the narrator to the narration draws a line that separates the sensory process of conceiving from the tendency towards abstract reasoning. The movements among conceivable levels in perceiving a narrative may indeed have a peculiar yet universal rhythm, but it is obvious that a sense of the rhythmical movement is too general to be a distinctive feature in describing major narrative effects.

The generic features of narrative encompass the vivid description of facts, episodes and events. Not merely a vehicle of communication, a narrative

also has a formative function. As a creative artifact, it enables the author to shape his or her understanding of the world in a way that otherwise would not be possible. The thriving production of short stories, novellas and novels since the eighteenth century is an example. The narratives embodied in myths, fables and folktales are also an example. Both of them question the assumption which views the emergence of narrative as evidence of the lack of reasoning power. Instead of merely seeking recurrent patterns, in narratives readers are willing to broaden their personal experiences. They have a two-fold purpose: to obtain a new perspective on the world as well as to acquaint themselves with the knowledge of the world from the narrative's projected perspective. In both creative and receptive situations, to maintain the narration's multidimensional scope offers an indispensable way to sustain a subtle and complex understanding of the world. Given the relationship of the narrator to the narration, the genre of narrative not only demands detailed representations of facts, events and episodes, but also offers a possibility to envision a unique viewpoint by which to represent them.

Genre both gives an individual work a textual closure and breaks the isolation of the work by associating it with other works of the same generic kind. Whenever we are confronted with a work in the narrative genre, we may discern that there are always at least two layers of movement, one is that between the narrator and the narration and the other between the author and the narrator. Because narrators detach themselves from authors and follow the logic of a fictionalized world, in a narrative, the way in which the generic intention is carried out in a narrative constitutes a challenge to the logic of the daily lives shared by the reader and the author. We laugh at Don Quixote even though we know how unlikely it is that a person will actually fight a

windmill. By the same token, the reader is expected to conceive a dialectical movement between the narrator and the author in order to comprehend the narrative accents such as irony, romance, humor, satire or realism. Frye maintains that in written narratives the narrator is normally identical to the author. When a writer like Conrad, for instance, employs a narrator to help him tell his story, "the genre of the written word is being assimilated to that of the spoken one" (247). It seems to me that this judgment is debatable.

Frye insists that what distinguishes a verbal literary structure from other verbal structures is its autonomy, for literature subordinates the question of fact or truth to the aim of "producing a structure of words for its own sake." The vitality of this autonomous structure lies in its "interconnected motifs" (74). Yet, as showed in the above analysis, it is genre rather than the linguistic self-referential tendency that retains the conventional power to make literature an autonomous entity distinguished from other parts of our living world. The concept of "verbal structure" is related to verbalization, in other words, a verbal structure is the result of the sentence-making process. In contrast, the concept of genre is related to textualization; genre functions on the level of the text as a whole. The process of textualization retains various relationship within the linguistic enclosure, such as the relationships of the text to the referential reality, to the authorial intention, to the interpretive potentiality, and to other relevant texts.

When we talk about literature, first of all, we talk about literary texts. However, texts are not literature in and of itself. Literature is a physically invisible world but a man-made reality. As Frye remarks, "a book, like a keyboard, is a mechanical device for bringing an entire artistic structure

under the interpretive control of a single person" (248). Each reader has to rebuild the world creatively. Just as a pianist has to know the rules of music to produce a piece of genuine piano music, a reader has to acquire some knowledge of the related genre to unfold the world hidden behind the text. Genre defines a space which the reader shares with the author. In Frye's own words, "the genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public" (247). Genre is a system of meaningful classification and has a long history to support genre-bound implications. The generic features carried by each text have a practical impact on the reader's imagination, motivating the interrelationship with certain entrenched ideas. These convey a tacit contract which both the author and the reader agree to follow. We expect to see undeserved affliction and to experience the *katharsis* of pity and fear while reading a Greek tragedy. Likewise, we are apt to interpret a poetic work as an individual emotion expressed by a single poet when we know it is a lyric. Moreover, genre embodies certain perspectives by which people speculate about the living world. The epic genre embodies the beliefs that there is a supernatural force which predetermines the course of human history and that there must be always a hero capable of saving the poor and the afflicted. A eulogy conveys a positive attitude toward virtuous achievement. An epitaph expresses the will to keep a historical relationship to a deceased person. A confession assumes that the person who reveals hidden guilt can thereby purify his or her soul. In the case of narrative, the genre itself prepares the reader to perceive the multiple layers of meanings, conflicts of interests, diverse modes of rhetoric, and personal attitudes conveyed in the narration. Therefore, although genre is a property that a text formally bears, it is also related to the content of the text and the expectation

which the author and the reader have of the particular genre. In this sense, when studying narrative as a genre we should be more cautious if limiting ourselves exclusively to its formal aspects of texts. We are going to discuss this further in chapter four.

The third work discussed is Fredric Jameson's The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. In this work, Jameson tries to put the problematics of narrative in a new light. Jameson maintains that when we look into narrative, "realism" is a theoretical approach whose inadequacy has been exposed by the achievements demonstrated in the masterpieces of the novelistic genre. The function of narrative goes beyond limits set up by the notion of representation. Practically, even Erich Auerbach's Mimesis attempts to produce a concept of literary works rather than to reproduce the represented objects (11-12). Besides the problem of *representation*, Jameson suggests, when considering the process of narrative, we should take account of the problem of *presentation* (13).

Claiming that he is indebted to Northrop Frye because working in the framework Frye pioneered in narrative analysis (12), Jameson yet distinguishes himself from Frye on two fundamental counts. First, unlike Frye who seeks the continuous law through the natural, human and spiritual worlds, for Jameson social relationships are the factors that distinguishes the human world from other parts of the world. He politicizes all social occurrences and considers narrative a channel that provides the political unconscious with an outlet. Secondly, Jameson shifts the focus from literary works to the interpretation of literary texts, saying, "our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretation through which we attempt to confront

and to appropriate it" (9-10).

Jameson declares that his theory is a historical approach, for history, in his opinion, is the ultimate foundation for every aspect of society. Jameson tells us that according to the Marxist viewpoint which he assumes, history is a totality made up of an array of modes of production. As the ultimate cause, history needs no reference for its own existence. Nevertheless, as a totality, it cannot be conceived directly. History is a structure that blocks off some historical possibilities while opening up others. In this sense, it is an "absent cause," since history itself is behind what has been actualized. The whole range of history is simply not attainable through representation. Besides, the mode of production is a synchronic system of social relations. As a set of relationships, "it is nowhere empirically present as an element, it is not a part of the whole or one of the levels" (36). Given these reasons, there is no room for the approach of representation in historicism.

Jameson states that history itself is not a text, but texts present the exclusive access to history (95). Only through narrative text can history can be approached. The process of historicization encompasses both the object and the subject. On the one hand, narrative partially textualizes historical content; on the other hand, interpretation appropriates historical consciousness and enmeshes it into our experience of the present. In this sense, narrative is a socially symbolic act and interpretation is the central part of historicization. Interpretation is rewriting. Every interpretation adds a new layer to the extant text. Thus, history appears in the form of narration and narration is a process of interpretation. Jameson thus disagrees with Frye regarding both the content and the form of literature. Of the issues Frye raises, there are two concepts to which Jameson has paid particular attention--one is desire, the

other is genre.

While discussing Frye's thoughts on romance, Jameson observes that Frye's thinking is mistaken because it confines itself to the notion of "nature" and fails to comprehend the implication of "a very peculiar and specialized social and historical phenomenon" (112). This comment exemplifies the general opinion in which he regards the nature of Frye's theory. Based on this disagreement, he introduces the concept of desire and endeavors to redefine and adapt it as a pillar of his own theoretical system.

Frye categorizes desire as a part of the content of literature. For Frye desire is an inborn thrust that pushes people to pursue better lives. Desire is also the primitive impulse of literary creation and is behind the "cyclical rhythms." In Frye's theory desire is not socially conditioned, rather it implies a utopian scheme and involves the restless ultimate energy that impels people restlessly to reach a higher level of social improvement. However, desire has no significant characteristics which differentiate from the genesis of vegetable and animal evolution. In this sense, Jameson observes that "desire is always outside of time, outside of narrative: it has no content, it is always the same in its cyclical moments of emergence" (68).

Jameson also considers desire the dynamics of literary movement. He needs a dynamic force to initiate his whole system, for in his system historical facts are merely inert data. Jameson refuses to interpret history teleologically. He defines the dynamics of his system as "utopian desire," "utopian fantasy" or "utopian impulse." Sometimes, in alliance with Freud, he names it "utopian libidinal investment" (157). Based on his Marxist doctrine, Jameson maintains that in all societies utopian desire generally presents itself through the

oppressed people's consciousness. It never purely appears, but always in repressed or distorted forms. In each particular epoch and society, the repression and distortion bear peculiar characteristics. Prompted by unconscious utopian desires, people consciously perceive the alien social conditions that prevent them from realizing the inborn utopian impulse. This psychological discontent has the nature of a political struggle and results in a complex which Jameson calls the "political unconscious." All narratives pertain to the political unconscious, and literature is always informed by the political unconscious. To be aware of the political unconscious is to detect and restore a reality that has been repressed. The political unconscious is the latent meaning behind the manifest one; in Jameson's terminology, it is often referred to as the meaning of the utopian propensity. The political unconscious is an inner impulse that is incarnated by narrative and released by interpretation.

Jameson also objects to Frye's theory regarding genre. Jameson sees Frye representing a school of genre criticism he labels the "semantic" tendency, "for which genre is essentially apprehended as a *mode*" (108). As a semantic approach, this theory is bound to the linguistic level and regards generic modes as containers without content (113). Both Frye and Jameson note that the notion of genre is rooted in the relationship between the writer and the reading public. However, Frye regards this relationship as direct, whereas Jameson sees it refracted through the medium of ideology. Jameson thus claims, "genres are essentially literal *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public" (106).

Jameson believes that although the perception of genre relies heavily

on formal properties, the emergence of generic forms generally is a social process and under the control of "the ideology of form." Therefore, to a certain extent, form should be apprehended as content (98-99). Jameson asserts that narrative is a symbolic act. This act contains the world symbolically and submits itself to the transformation of form at the same time. Jameson argues that even in some purely formal factors such as "sheer color," one's perception is still prompted to reveal the essence of the text by "sensory abstraction." In the case of genre, each generic form is a result of "the sedimentation of various generic discourses" (147). The process of sedimentation endows the outer form with an ideological message. As a shell this outer form "continues to emit its ideological message long after the extinction of its host" (151). In other words, a generic form carries its ideological signals long after its original content has become historically obsolete (186).

Since every individual text is merely a socially symbolic act, in order to reincarnate the symbolized meaning one needs to rely on the act of interpretation. Jameson states that the gist of his book is to "argue the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts" (17). In his opinion, an interpretive depth is what we cannot find in modernism and postmodernism. People perceive and rewrite their history mainly through the interpretation of texts. Indeed, in The Political Unconscious it is almost impossible to draw a clear-cut line between the interpreted and the interpreter. Many of Jameson's concepts take alternative sides. History appears in the form of narration, whereas narration is a process of interpretation. Interpreters come on the stage as a part of history, performing their function in the process of textualization. If we notice Jameson's own interpretation of Marxism, it is not

surprising to see this ambivalence. For Jameson, the most essential characteristic of Marxism is that it is a mental operation. Unlike traditional Marxist hermeneutics that advocate social revolutions as the way to overcome the gap between man and the alien world, Jameson takes the mental operation as the vital means to reunite the people with their hostile environment. People reform society mainly by interpreting and conceptualizing historical facts. Jameson acknowledges that his theory has certain Hegelian tone. Indeed, in Hegel's Absolute Spirit, the object and the subject are originally two parts of one entity and supposedly reach their reunion through the subject's self-realization.

Narrative for Jameson is rather an assemblage of narrative writings instead of a clearly-defined genre. He makes no effort to define the generic features of narrative, and even claims that "the novel is the end of genre" (151), since it combines various generic patterns within itself and breaks the limits of conventional notions of genre. Jameson asserts that narrative is an all-informing process, the center for restructuring the problematics of ideology, unconsciousness, desire, representation, history and cultural production. In short, it is "the central function or *instance* of the human mind" (13). It restores to the surface of the text a repressed and buried reality (20). In twentieth-century modernism, the function of narrative is much more than merely to reflect social life. As a symbolic act, narrative involves "a whole Utopian compensation for increasing dehumanization on the level of daily life" (42). The necessity of narrative is to retextualize history (102).

From this perspective, Jameson often terms narrative as the "narrative paradigm," an inherited model that offers objective "solutions" to the

transformation of the equally objective raw material into text (186). Jameson calls this material "ideologemes," the minimal units of a larger class discourse (87). To be precise, they are symbolic types related to imagery, daydreams and wish-fulfillments. Therefore, narrative is "narrative of ideology" (185). Narrative gives the free-floating objects a primary verbal form, and the form, in turn, is a social contract between the writer and the reader who both take part in making the collective consciousness.

For Jameson, narrative is thus a movement that can fulfill its functions only through the interaction between history as factual events and history as the collective consciousness. Jameson criticizes some major critical schools such as psychoanalysis and structuralism for the narrowness of their critical perspectives. In his opinion, these critical approaches grapple with only one aspect of historical or literary phenomena in order to maintain the logical coherence of their preconceived theories, neglecting or even distorting other parts of history. He invents the term "strategy of containment" to define the nature of such interpretive approaches. The lack of a sense of totality causes these theories to confine themselves to a narrow self-defined territory, the so-called "strategy of containment." These theories are possessive about their self-sufficiency and can only interpret a given text in a "local way." In his critique Jameson indicates his intention to surmount the limits of these critical approaches. However, if we follow this line of thinking, we may find that Jameson's own theory contains the same problem of limitation.

Jameson's critique of other literary theories deepens the question of whether narrative is an autonomous entity or an appendage to other social and cultural occurrences. His own treatment of this issue is also revealing. He discusses narrative in its totality, and in his book, the concept of narrative in

comes out as narrative en masse. Yet at the same time, Jameson defines the nature of narrative in terms of its dependence on other social occurrences, mainly modes of production. For Jameson narrative by definition is a symbolic act. As a symbolic act its significance apparently lies in the suggested or embodied meanings that do not intrinsically belong to it.

Jameson straightforwardly states that his argument is based on Marxism. The founders of Marxism claim that their philosophy is the culmination of the classic German philosophy, especially Feuerbach's materialism and Hegel's dialectics. However, like intellectual predecessors (including Enlightenment philosophies), the philosophy of Marxism is bolstered by an antagonism between object and subject, material life and spiritual life. Every product of intellectual labor is attributed to ideology. All ideological phenomena are determined by social settings, and ultimately by the mode of production. This is why Jameson insists that narrative is merely a symbolic act, a paradigm, an ideologeme and a utopian compensation, since narrative is a product of the spirit. Jameson doesn't regard narrative as a genre; in his opinion, each narrative is related more intrinsically to the reflected social world and the reflecting mind than to the textual world to which it belongs. Narrative is more an assemblage of narrative works than a conceptual entity. Yet to ignore narrative as a genre actually results in giving up a chance to define a conceptual space in which narratives can be studied on a level beyond the antagonism between object and subject. Jameson has his difficulties when he tries to find a middle ground between a Marxism that insists on materialistic determinism and a contemporary criticism that upholds the notion of textualization.

"Text" is a central concept in contemporary criticism. The tacit assumption that there is no way to conceive the real world except through texts is part of most contemporary theories. Undeniably, texts are the only channels through which we are able to communicate with the people from the past or with the people who are far away. As Jameson puts it, the only access we may gain to history is through texts. Yet in following Jameson's line of reasoning here, we encounter a paradox. From one perspective, texts are a product of mental activity. Thus in Jameson's system, no matter whether it is simply determined by the context or has the power to influence the life in a dialectical manner, texts after all are an ideological reflection of reality (the mode of production). On the other hand, texts are a major object of our perception--texts have a physical existence and generate interpretations. Existing texts turn out to be the objects against which other authors pit their own works. For instance, one of Cervantes's purposes in writing Don Quixote is to counter romances of chivalry. Given this double-faceted nature, amid the antagonism between subject and object there is no way to situate a text in such a manner that can solidly establish its position.

To single out texts as the only object of literary study obviously challenges the critical tradition as well as the traditional notion of the antagonism between subject and object. The focus actually questions the division between ideology and modes of production. First, the notion of text problematizes the distinction between fictionality and factuality, for in the process of textualization both lose and fail to restore their identities. Second, since every text is also an object, it is no longer so convincing to consider a literary work to be an objectification of the author's subjective mood. We cannot judge the author's mood prior to the creation of the text unless we

adduce it through the interpretation of the text. Rather, we assume that a particular subjective mood motivates the writer to produce a text. It is not only for the reader but also for the writer that the text becomes an object of contemplation.

There is a world of texts. A novel is a text. It is related not only to the society in which it was produced, but also is connected to other texts in the textual world. The world of texts is an objective world comprised of extant texts, including literary works as well as historical, philosophical, political, sociological, and other types of writing. Whether or not the connection is explicated, there various objective relationships exist among these texts. As soon as a text is produced, it automatically acquires a position in this textual network. For instance, it is true that Maxine Hong Kingston subtitles her The Woman Warrior, "Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts." However, as soon as the book was published, it relationship to the texts in American literature, ethnic literature, women's studies, cross-cultural studies and other disciplines was simultaneously established. In this sense, the textual world possesses an autonomy beyond the intentions of any single author. Novelists are influenced not only by their society, but also by the understanding of life sustained in and by other texts. The textual world is a physical intermediary between the consciousness of the author's time and of the reader's time. Interpretations and appropriations of texts provide feedback to the textual world. This feedback constructs a major channel through which the sophisticated thinking of writers like Auerbach, Frye and Jameson have emerged. The textual world is also a repository of our intelligibility and sensibility.

As Jameson points out, we conceive a text only through the lens of interpretation. It is inevitable that a given reader is biased by a certain viewpoint. However, this fact does not contradict the idea that the textual world is unbiased in its existence, even it has been partially viewed. To interpret a text is to offer access to its meaning, given at the point when a reader makes contact with its content. The meaning of a text results from the interaction between the writer's intentions and the reader's intentions. Multifaceted and constrained at both ends, a text's meaning consists of but not in language. On the one hand, language is not language unless it is capable of eliciting a response in another person. A text will convey something, but it cannot constrain the reader's response. On the other hand, narrative language is textualized language. And to textualize language is to objectify it. Objectified language functions on a particular assigned scope. Within a text language is not only divided into interrelated discourses, but also possesses various relationships with the language circumscribed in other texts. Thus, although different critics (such as the Marxists, Freudians and structuralists) stress different aspects of a text and disagree with each other, there is still much overlap among their interpretations of a particular text. It is reasonable to assume that a text's potential meaning is open to explications from different perspectives. We cannot deny the existence of a table merely because a physicist and a chemist see it in different ways.

In the study of narrative, it is crucial to acknowledge that there exists a world of texts. This textual world is beyond the type of comprehension that is based on the antagonism between subject and object. Narrative is neither a means to obtain knowledge of the physical world, nor a vehicle to express the author's subjective moods and thoughts, although it is related to both.

Narrative is part of the dimension of the human life which cannot be defined by either the concept of subject or object. In other words, the Marxist relationship between ideology and modes of production is insufficient when discussing the nature of narrative. Narrative is part of people's lives, and they create, expand and enrich the entity of narrative. People embody it in language, and rely on narrative for their mental needs, just as they rely on the physical world for their material needs. Along with the evolution of consciousness that enhances interpretation, over generations, there are interactions between the textual world of narrative and the intelligibility that receives and creates it. The world of narrative stands for itself, even though it substantiates history and embodies the consciousness that interprets history, In this sense, to concentrate solely on the symbolic aspect of narrative is to deprive it of its true essence.

In exploring the nature of narrative (the novel, in his terminology), Mikhail Bakhtin demonstrates stunning foresight. His assumptions of the necessity of narrative are particularly interesting. In Bakhtin's opinion, there is a portion of human experience which only narrative can convey and sustain. Neither emotional self-expression nor rational thinking is adequate for people to communicate this portion of human experience.

Without exception, Bakhtin sees a human being as the acting center in a cluster of relationships. Every human being assumes an "axiological position" (Art and Answerabiltiy 41). Every action is a reaction, whether it be to the environment or to the combined effect of other persons' actions upon the acting person. An act also carries out the actor's attitude toward the event in which he or she is acting. In turn, the actor's attitude constitutes an

influential element that affects other people's further reactions. Each person's act affects the relationship he or she has with other people, and the relationship itself keeps changing along with the change of time and space. The specific point where a particular time and a particular space are intrinsically integrated is a "chronotope." Bakhtin insists that "the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic" (Dialogic Imagination 85). The present moment contains the stratification of the past, while a future prediction can never sever its relationship with the present time, that is, with the moment in which the prediction was made. Without knowing the relationships among things one can hardly understand the nature of the things. Scientific analyses of particular disciplines have one common drawback: they can only reveal parts instead of the whole. To know the relationship one person has to others is a prerequisite for knowing oneself. In order to recognize oneself, one has to see oneself through the eyes of others. In Bakhtin's words, "I myself cannot be the author of my own value, just as I cannot lift myself by my own hair" (Art and Answerability 55). Every person's consciousness contains not only the awareness of oneself, but also one's consciousness of others, including the assumption of others' reversed thinking. Therefore, every phenomenon in life contains a multidimensional loop. To feature a particular viewpoint in framing an event as a practical occasion may silence other voices for a while, but cannot totally eliminate the double-voiced nature of experience. For Bakhtin, despite all the means humans have thus far contrived for the purpose of communication, there is only one way to maintain the living moment. It is the language which has not yet been shaped into separate and specific disciplines. This particular language is the object of what Bakhtin calls "metalinguistics" (Dostoevsky's

Poetics 181). Within this language, every word "includes various kinds and degrees of *otherness* of the other's word and various forms of relationships to it (stylization, parody, polemics, and so forth) as well as various methods of expunging it from speech life" (Speech Genres 133). The most demonstrative way of using this language is in art. The axiological relationship to the other is the organizing power in all aesthetic forms (Art and Answerability 189). The single best artistic genre for actualizing this potential is narrative (the novel). Even at its most basic level, "every word in narrative literature expresses a reaction to another reaction, the author's reaction to the reaction of the hero; that is, every concept, image, and object lives on two planes, is rendered meaningful in two value-contexts--in the context of the hero and in that of the author" (218).

Bakhtin obviously developes his theory against Marxist ideology. According to Marxism, in each particular phase of human history there must be a system of thought that reflects the will of the ruling class. This system of thought composes the spirit of the time and controls the thinking of other classes by political means. Bakhtin observes that the total dominance of a single ideology is merely a theoretical scheme but is not a reality. In real life, people's thinking is prosaic by nature. Multi-levelness and contradictions actually exist in the objective social world. "In this social world, planes were not stages but *opposing camps*, and the contradictory relationships among them were not the rising or descending course of an individual personality, but the *condition of society*" (Dostoevsky's Poetics 27). The novel is especially important because it carries out the unofficial version of social life (Dialogic Imagination 13). A novelist employs an "essential formal and generic mask,"

which secures him or her a position from which to view social life as it is (161). Narrative (the novel) is the genre that relies on stylistic three-dimensionality in order to accommodate the need to sustain individual differences and contradictions. These individual differences and contradictions are enriched by social heteroglossia (11, 284).

In The Dialogic Imagination Bakhtin expresses his notion about the generic features of the novel in different ways. In one section, he says that the basic characteristics of the novel are its stylistic multiple dimensionality, which is related to its multi-layered consciousness, its radical change of images, and its zone for structuring literary images (11). In another place, Bakhtin tells us that the novel's generic features are its diversity of voices, heteroglossia, and the narrative system that structures them with artistic subtlety (300). In yet another place, he observes that the generic feature of the novel is the "auto-criticism of discourse." By this term Bakhtin means the novel's inner imperative to criticize itself concerning the way it reflects, organizes, transposes and replaces reality (412). Among these characteristics, the one that occupies a central position is the concept of the "zone." It is central because it connects the functions of the other characteristics. Bakhtin names this zone "the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness" (11).

Narrative is meant to sustain the phenomena that have not been dissected by the analytic mind. Narrative presents itself as a vehicle that makes the vanished voices distinguishable. In Bakhtin's words, a novel should be "a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices," "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (Dostoevsky's Poetics 6).

[According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky is the author who has reached the highest achievement in this respect.] In a narrative the voices are "independent." Characters have their own roles to play; they are not the author's puppets. Characters have voices which are distinctively different from the author's voice. The author's design for a character should be a design for the character's own discourse (65). Instead of asserting a finalizing voice, an author should compose in a manner that accommodates the autonomous consciousnesses of characters (68). These different consciousnesses are "unmerged." For in a narrative each character holds a particular position and assumes a discourse of his or her own. The boundaries among these various consciousnesses are where a narrative's vitality lies, for only with these autonomous states of consciousnesses can characters enter into contact and talk with one another. The autonomy of consciousness is the foundation for the dialogic relationships among characters.

Although a narrative maintains a polyphony of fully valid consciousnesses, such as that of the author, the narrator and characters, these consciousnesses have certain relationships among themselves. Bakhtin calls these relationships "dialogic relationships." The relationship of the author to the narrative determines the nature and the structure of the narrative (Art and Answerability 5). The author relies on the image of hero to embody this relationship (7). Authors need heroes because they want to recognize themselves through others (15). To create a hero is an aesthetic way to project oneself into the image of the other (22, 55). A narrator can never be a nonparticipating "third person" (Dostoevsky's Poetics 18). In every narrated voice, there are always at least two contending voices (30). Because of the endless interactions effected by dialogic relationships, everything narrated

exists in a moment of unfinalized transition (167). "Everything must be reflected in everything else, all things must illuminate one another dialogically" (177). In a narrative, every character stands for a position and viewpoint which are set against each other dialogically (360). In a novel, a plot is subordinate to the coordination and exposure of the dialogue of languages, whereas "a dialogue of languages is a dialogue of social forces perceived not only in their static co-existence, but also as a dialogue of different times, epochs and days" (365). In every narrative dialogic relationships produce a narrative movement that potentially moves beyond the narrative's textual closure and leaves the composition open-ended. Novelistic images are dialogized images, and a novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of language. Only this system is able to sustain the insight created at the boundaries between cultures and languages (Dialogic Imagination 46, 49-50). Dialogic relationships are also embodied in the language used in narrative. In a narrative language combines a centripetal force that maintains the linguistic cohesion and a centrifugal force that refers to the signified social and cultural processes (216-17). Bakhtin observes that "for the novelist, there is no world outside his social-heteroglot perception" (330). Thus, in every novel the image of language is a prosaic one. In other words, it is a image that resists the authorial intention.

Thus there is a contradiction between the novel as the author's intentional product and the novel that contains the dialogic movement countering the author's intention. This concept sounds paradoxical. However, this paradox is exactly why narrative (the novel) needed to come into being as a genre. As mentioned above, Bakhtin uses the term "zone" to describe the

generic features of the novel, trying through this term to postulate a way that may provide a solution to this paradox.

Bakhtin maintains that as a genre the novel is able to contain other genres within itself. What a novel does is to circumscribe a space generically in which it can parody other genres, making them more flexible and free by inserting "an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openedendeness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)." This space creates the zone that qualifies the text as a novel. Bakhtin calls this a "new and peculiar zone for structuring artistic models (a zone of contact with the present in all its openendedness), a zone that was first appropriated by the novel" (Dialogic Imagination 3-7). The novelistic zone establishes itself exactly at the point where the author's intention to control the narration intersects the plane of reality that has been narrated. Bakhtin thus calls it "the zone of contact." This is a channel for heteroglossia to develop in the novel just as in life. Bakhtin insists that "the novel is the only developing genre" (4). Besides accommodating such literary genres as short stories, lyrical songs, poems, and dramatic scenes, the novelistic zone also permits the incorporation of such extra-artistic elements as everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, or religious genres (320). The novel's stylistic uniqueness as a genre lies in its ability to combine those subordinated yet still relatively autonomous types of language (262). On the one hand, the generic zone excludes the possibility that at his or her will the author will cut off its contact with the narrated reality. On the other hand, the diversity of stylization provides the possibility that different consciousnesses will be embodied in different types of language. These two elements constitute the rationale for the contradiction between the author's intention and the

narrative tendency to go against the authorial intention. In this sense, the novel's discourse lives a life that is distinctly its own (43). And the novel is plasticity itself (39). "The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions" (263). The author's voice is only one of these voices. Constrained by the tension between the author's intention and the narrative tendency, Bakhtin observers that by its very nature the narrator's discourse belongs to some specific discursive type. To a certain extent this type of discourse liberates itself from the function of narration assigned by the author's initial (Dostoevsky's Poetics 205).

Bakhtin's theory presents a crucial question about the relationship between the author's intention and the text's meaning. If narrative is merely a rhetorical zone that provides an enabling space for the interplay of various voices, if the author is only an agent that integrates different discourses into a text and renders them pertinent, then how can the interpretation of a text explain in the first place why the author should bother to deal with different discourses instead of a single voice? An author cannot control the reader's interpretation of the narrative, not only because the author's intention is merely one of the elements that render a text meaningful. In the case of narrative, it is also because this generic mold is able to sustain the polyphony of discourses uttered by different viewpoints. The narrated interactions of these discourses may reveal certain aspects to the reader which the author did not anticipate. However, when the author relies on the narrative to grasp and convey the intended meaning, his or her attitude toward complex being

engaged is not as straightforward as the emotions a poet expresses in a lyric. In the novelistic narrative there are at least two doubled-voiced layers. One is the author's attitude toward a particular phenomenon, such as Henry James's attitude in The Portrait of a Lady of Isabel's adventure in the English society. Another is in the attitude of text itself, such as in Dostoevsky's "Notes from Underground." There is always a refraction caused by the viewpoint of the narrator, who is in the midst of the two interacting layers between the author and the text. In some novels we may find that the authors try to demolish their personal traces by introducing double narrators into the narratives. In Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, we have not only Mr. Lockwood but also Mrs. Dean (Nelly) between the author and the reader. As Bakhtin maintains, although the narrator's voice is merely one of the voices uttered in the narrative, it does convey a overall tone through the whole narration. For instance, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance, when we reach the end of the narrative and find that Coverdale confesses his love to Priscilla, we are invited to realize that this poet's whole narration as related to his beloved object is most likely an idealized one, based on his sympathy and biased by his own feeling.

Bakhtin maintains that a text's essence lies on the boundary between two subjects and consciousnesses. In the case of novelistic creativity, there is always a dialogue between the text and the framing context (Speech Genres 106). In the case of receiving, the reader simultaneously takes an active and responsive attitude toward the text (68). This attitude is evidence of the changing context. When the author produces sentences by arranging the framework of the narrative discourse, he or she always has the would-be reader in mind. This is why these sentences have been named "utterances"

instead of "language" (63). The problem is that a text has different readers in different eras. Recently, critics have pointed out that the meaning of text is an ambiguous if not hopeless concept. One of the factors that subvert the traditional notion of meaning is the exposure of the gap between the text's meaning for the author's contemporaries and the meaning for its present-day readers. If the meaning of "text" is exclusive to what it means for the author's contemporaries, we will have to put ourselves in the shoes of the ancients, and thus literature will turn out to be merely a means to draw us back into the past. On the other hand, if the meaning of "text" is what we read into it in accordance with our interests and purposes, then we will inevitably deprive the meaning of its historical context and implications. However, there is something in narrative that bridges the gap between the chronotope of the author's contemporaries and that of the reader's: the narrator.

The narrator is a twofold entity. On the one hand, the narrator is the author's invention, a viewpoint that reveals and participate in the narrated events (even if only for peeping into the protagonist's physical and psychic worlds, as Flaubert's narrator in Madame Bovary). Therefore, the existence of narrator implies a potential relationship to the author and begs for the contextualization at the end of the narrative. Yet though it is one of the voices occurring in the narrative, the narrator's viewpoint cannot entirely manipulate the reader's conception as the reader is still able to restore the narrator's position related to the narration. In this sense, the narrator also becomes the reader's creation and thus in the end becomes a product made in the context of the reader's time. Therefore, the narrator is an indispensable link which connects the author's intention in the creative context with the

reader's understanding in the receptive context.

Tzvetan Todorov once observed that when Aristotle wrote Poetics, what was in his mind was not literature but "representation (*mimesis*) utilizing language" (xxiii). In the case of narrative, this comment on the cornerstone of literary criticism suggests that when a theorist or critic discusses a narrative, the analytic discourse is essentially different from the narrative itself. This observation is particularly relevant in the West. Since Aristotle, there has always been an attempt at placing everything in the rational framework of the natural sciences. On the one hand, under the demand of its readership, a narrative keeps working on the reader's imagination through the author's devices of manipulation, plotting, characterization, the narrator's perception and perspective, the medium of language, the generic mold, and the connection to the narrated reality. On the other hand, rational analysis holds the other end of the string, maneuvering to integrate certain aspects of the narrative into a larger intellectual context, such as the tendency of representation, the canons also demonstrated by Christianity, and the political impulse already indicated by Marxism. If we take Zola's naturalist novels as an example, we may also conceive the retrospective impact which rational thinking has effected on the creation of narrative. However, these rational analyses themselves rest on the assumption that a narrative basically follows the same logic as rational thinking but only reveals itself in a perceptible way. Bakhtin has seriously challenged this assumption. His arguments urge us to look for a logic that is unique to narrative itself.

Jurgen Habermas remarks that in the West, one of the resources of the inner dynamic in the history of metaphysics is the tension between two forms of knowledge: one form that is "the discursive, which is empirically based,"

and the other form that is "the anamnestic, which aims at intellectual intuition" (31). We may thereby reason that empirically-based discourse persistently resists intellectual intuition, because the latter brings it to an abstract level by grasping its similarities to or differences from other discourses, neglecting wholeness on its own term. Narrative takes a different approach to deal with this tension. It retains discourse on the empirical level, constrained by the tension between itself and intuitive rational thinking. The constraint of rational thinking consists not only in the critic's analysis, but also in the author's thinking apart from the narrative formation.

In short, since Plato and Aristotle, there has always been a tension between the empirical experience of the world and intuitive rational discourse in the West. This tension influences the formation of narrative and confines the perspective of narrative theory. The particular pattern of this tension results in a particular type of narrative. In other words, the properties of narrative in the West are formulated in its particular cultural milieu. Therefore, in order to inquire into the nature of narrative as a way of approaching its universality, in order to gain a ground beyond the limitations caused by cultural relativity, it is a good idea to see how people perceive narrative in a culture outside of Western civilization, outside of the dichotomy between empirical experience and intuitive rational discourse seen it in the West. This realization is apt to lead to the discussion of narrative theories from the East, since, as it is commonly acknowledged, there are striking cultural distinctions between the West and the East.

It goes without saying that because of the varieties of narrative on both sides, the general comparison between the West and East is too broad to cope

with in a single treatise. In this dissertation, I shall confine myself to English and American literature on the one hand, and Chinese literature on the other, thereby hoping to take a small step in the direction toward a comprehensive theory of narrative.

The Nature of Narrative: a Comparative Perspective from the East

In Chinese the conceptual equivalent of "narrative" in English is *xu shi* 敘事. This term is now used to translate the term "narrative." Literally it means "to recount things." This term encompasses two types of narrations. In one case, it refers to a verbalization of the images of the things in the recounter's eye. It gives a detailed portrait of the described object, but the arrangement of description corresponds the movement of the recounter's inspired emotion. In literature, even in its earliest days, this type of narration had already secured its position as an independent genre named *fu* 賦.[2] The name of this genre has been translated as rhapsody, or rhyme-prose, prose poem, poetic essay and poetic description (Knechtges, xiii). This genre has established a tradition in Chinese poetry which expresses the poet's subjective emotion mainly by describing the objective things that have

2 The first prominent group of the writers of *Fu* genre was formed in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). Its most eminent representative is Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 339-278 B.C.). There is no solid evidence to show when this word started to be used as the name of the genre. The earliest evidence we can find so far is in the biographies of those writers by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 or 135-87? B.C.) in his *Shi Ji* 史記 (Records of the Historian. The golden age of the *fu* genre in the history of Chinese literature was in the Han dynasty (206 B. C.-A.D. 220).

inspired the emotion. The poet highlights the related aspects of the objects and embellishes some particular details, showing their erudition in flora and fauna, astronomy, mineralogy, architecture, geography, history, ritual, medicine, dress, weaponry, conveyance, folklore and music. Although the narration is constrained by the things being describing, the guiding line here is the movement of the poet's emotional reaction toward these things. Moreover, most of the poets working in this genre have shied away from a direct description of social events. They focus much more on the descriptions of the splendor of capitals, imperial gardens, palaces, halls, hunting, travel, sightseeing, palaces, halls, rivers, seas, birds, snow, the moon, musical instruments, dancing, etc. This type of narration does not confirm to the concept of narrative as defined in this essay, for it doesn't tell a story. It has a close relationship to the genre of poetry, for it confirms to a required rhythmical form.

The other type of *xu shi* 敘事 is more relevant to our purpose. This type of recounting largely overlaps the dimensions demarcated in the West by the concept of narrative in the West. In other words, it mainly consists of storytelling. As in the West, it doesn't limit itself exclusively to the genre of the novel. In China, the relationship between narrative and fiction is rather complicated. Besides fiction, a large portion of narrative embraces myth, legend and historical writing. Narrative began with stories of myth and legends of historical figures, and acquired its mature form first in historical writing instead of the novel (the distinctions among these different genres will be discussed later). Yet throughout the history of Chinese literature, critics and scholars have relied on various conceptual means to categorize certain works under the rubric of fiction. Some of these fictional narratives

cannot easily be fitted into the Western pattern of storytelling with which we are familiar. However, when we examine those Chinese works that have been traditionally considered fictions, although the definitions in different cases are measured by different standards, surprisingly we find that the majority of them indeed are a form of storytelling. This is a significant coincidence. It implies that whether the author is aware of it or not, if the writing is meant to carry out the functions we generally attribute to the genre of fiction (especially the novel), more often than not, the textual content reveals an ingrained tendency to embody itself as a particular type of verbal expression which we have recognized as narrative. Even if in one cultural situation narrative has been defined from a special perspective, and in another circumstance some of its other features have been particularly stressed, as two similar instances sustaining and conveying human experience, the narratives of two different cultures is obviously comparable.

The Chinese translation of the term "fiction" is *xiao shuo* 小說. A short story is *xiao shuo* of short length 短篇小說. A novella is *xiao shuo* of medium length 中篇小說. The novel is normally translated as fiction of long length 長篇小說. Literally *xiao shuo* means "small talk." The earliest evidence of this term we can find so far is in *Zhuang Zi* 莊子, a work mainly written by Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (ca. 369-286 B. C.). In chapter 26 *Waiwu* 外物 ("External Things") it says, "to embellish small talk in order to achieve a high reputation, this is (an effort) far away from the manner of profundity" (925).[3] The etymological meaning of this term (*xiao shuo*) is slightly different from how we understand it today. The divergence stems from the interpretation of the

[3] 飾小說以干縣令，其於大達亦遠矣。

words *shuo* 說 (talk). In *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* 現代漢語詞典 (The Dictionary of Modern Chinese) there are six definitions for this word: opinion and criticism as the noun, and to say, to explain, to introduce and to refer as the verb. However, according to Xu Shen's 許愼 (ca. 58-147) *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (The Explanatory Dictionary of Characters A.D. 100), the first etymological dictionary in China, at the time when Zhuang Zi 莊子 used this word, the definition of *shuo* 說 meant to reveal the hidden meaning in order to obtain pleasure (93).[4] Thus, as a verbal expression, it has a twofold meaning, indicating both the act of revealing and the predicted effect of entertaining. In the term *xiao shuo*, the word *xiao* also has a twofold meaning. It indicates both physical smallness and moral insignificance. Therefore, when the term of *xiao shuo* 小說 is used to name fiction as the genre in the first place, it comprises a kind of verbal expression that is short in its length, seemingly trivial in its moral value, revelatory in its function, and entertaining in its nature.

From the very beginning, historians of Chinese literature have been alert to the significance of maintaining its generic divisions.[5] During the history of Chinese literature, historians and critics keep putting works regarded as "small talk" under the name of *xiao shuo* 小說 (interestingly, the element they disregarded is the length of the works). When the term *xiao shuo* 小說 was adapted to translate the concept of fiction, it turned out that a large portion of this assemblage was bearing the generic features of fiction (or the novel) as understood in the Western mind. Meng Yao 孟瑤 asserts in

[4] 說，釋也。從言兌聲。 Also see Duan Yucai 段玉裁's annotation.

[5] As early as in sixth century, the compilers of anthologies, such as Xiao Tong 蕭統 in compiling *Wen Xuan* 文選 (see Knechtges 4), started to classify literary works according to their genres.

her *Zhongguo Xiaoshou Shi* 中國小說史 (A History of Chinese Fiction) that the notion of *xiao shuo* 小說 in the ancient Chinese mind "doesn't have any relationship to the notion of fiction (the so-called *xiao shuo*) we have today" (2). This remark is rather groundless. As a matter of fact, before the notion of fiction (or the novel) was introduced from the West, Chinese critics had already used the term *xiao shuo* 小說 to name the most important works discussed in Meng's History, such as short stories in the Tang dynasty, *Sanguo Yanyi* 三國演義 (The Three Kingdoms), *Shuihu Zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), *Xiyou Ji* 西游記 (Journey to the West) and *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Chamber). The earlier short pieces listed by the historians set forth some essential features for the genre which the later works have developed into longer narratives.

Starting from Ban Gu 班固 (32-102) in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), the official historians normally include a section in their works to record titles of the important works in a particular period. These works are listed principally according to their genres, such as Confucian classics, history, philosophy, poetry and essay etc. However, historians have trouble cataloguing those works that bear the nature of "small talk" that cannot easily be fitted into these categories. Ban Gu 班固 first uses *xiao shuo* 小說 as the rubric to collect works of this type in his *Han Shu* 漢書 (The History of Han Dynasty). He comments: "The writers of *xiao shuo* are most likely those lower officers. They made *xiao shuo* out of the gossip and hearsay which are collected from the people on the streets." Ban Gu 班固 divides all the books he lists into ten groups, but he remarks that among them only "nine groups are worth reading." The exception is *xiao shuo* 小說. However, he still includes the titles of those *xiao shuo* 小說 for the historical record. He

explains, "Confucius says 'there must be something worthy observing even in the trivial. [However], it is plausible that one will be bogged down if pursuing too far [in this direction].' Therefore, a learned person shouldn't write *xiao shuo* himself, but neither should he do away with them. Even they have been composed by those who are living a vulgar life and have little intelligence, we still need to record them to save them from extinction. There might be a few words worth listening to, even if they are the talkings of rustics" (249: 817).[6] It is insignificant but might be worth listening to. This is the judgment on the moral values of *xiao shuo* that continues to shape Chinese critics and historians' opinions since Ban Gu 班固. Even in the 18th century, under Qian Long's reign (1736-1759) in the Qing dynasty, in *Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Annotated Catalogue of the Imperial Library), it is stated that *xiao shuo* consists of three groups. The first is to recount miscellaneous events, the second is to record hearsay about strange things, and the third is to collect insignificant talk. The stated purpose for keeping these works in the Imperial Library is merely to expand knowledge.

In the comments of historians and critics, the other judgment that frequently occurs on the values of *xiao shuo* 小說 regards its truthfulness. As Lu Xun 魯迅 points out, in their lists of *xiao shuo* 小說 historians never include the long-length storyteller scripts (*hua ben* 話本) of the Song dynasty (960-1279) and the historical novels (*yan yi* 演義) of the Yuan (1206-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties (157). For they consider fictional versions of history distortions of history. When Changsun Wuji 長孫無忌 and others composed *Sui Shu* 隋書 (The History of Sui Dynasty, the key writer of

[6] Also see Lu Xun's 魯迅 A Brief History of Chinese Novel (152-53).

the work is Wei Zheng 魏徵) under Tang Taizong's reign (627-649), for the first time *xiao shuo* 小說 was definitely excluded from the category of history. For although these works talk about historical events and anecdotes, what they eventually recount is only gossip and hearsay (see Wei, 4: 1012). As a matter of fact, in the history of Chinese literary criticism, one of the most frequented tactics, for both the critics who intend to defend the value of the novel and those who want to devalue the novel as a genre, is arguing the truthfulness of fiction. The arguments, however, are based on different rationales.

We have already observed that there is always a tension between theoretical speculations over narrative and narrative practice itself in the West. The same pattern also occurs in Chinese literature. Since most *xiao shuo* 小說 are stories told by narrators, and since the measurement we use in order to judge whether or not a work is narrative is to see whether or not it is a story told by a narrator (or narrators), from the standards that Chinese critics and historians use to categorize *xiao shuo*小說, we may see that there are two conflicts contributing to the tension related to the understanding of narrative. One is the conflict between the moral values assigned by critics concerning narrative and the social functions a narrative has actually carried out. The other conflict is that between factual truthfulness and fictional truthfulness. Both issues are associated with understanding of why narrative has come into being as an indispensable part of intelligibility in this particular cultural circumstance.

The first issue involves the discrepancy between critics' notions about the functions of narrative and the functions narrative has actually performed in describing the world. As mentioned above, narrative has an inborn tendency of anti-rationalization. A narrative exhibits its wholeness on the

perceptual level and relies on a perceptive comprehension to maintain this wholeness. However, in the history of Chinese literature, it is also a common phenomenon that critics not only frame the interpretation of narrative in the form of rational explanations, but also subordinate them to certain rational norms, especially the Confucian axioms.

Related to the presumption that fiction is insignificant and entertaining, there are normally three canonical functions which critics assign to narrative. One is to record the episodes and events ignored by official histories because of their insignificance and abnormality.[7] Another is to educate people through entertainment to learn the orthodox morality,[8] or at least not to jeopardize these moral principles.[9] The third one is to

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[7] For instance, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721) maintains, "the side-notes and novels (*xiao shuo*) have established themselves as an independent genre, prevailing as a mutual-referral to official histories" (是知偏記小說，自成一家，而能與正史參行. 1:273).

[8] In his "Preface" (written in 1397) to Qu You 瞿佑's *Jiandeng Xinhua* 剪燈新話 New Anecdotes Under the Lamplight), Ling Yunhan 凌雲翰 says, "although this book is a novel, one can hardly deny its value in the world, since it persuades people to follow the moral ways and advocates the retribution of immoral behaviors, and every move in it contains the motive to provide examples of goodness and punishment for the violation of the morales" (是編雖稗官之流，而勸善懲惡，動存鑑戒，不可謂無補于世. See Qu You, 4). This is the typical attitude of the intelligentsia toward the novel in ancient China.

[9] Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824)'s defense of his *Maoying Zhuan* 毛穎傳 ("The Story of Mao Ying") is one of the famous arguments of this kind. He insists that even Confucius himself sometimes has a playful intention in treating writings of various kinds. For instance, in *Shi Jing*, 詩經 (Classic of Songs, a book compiled by Confucius), there is a line, saying "whoever handles humor and irony properly is not abusing rhetoric" (善戲謔兮，不為虐兮). Therefore, Han declares, he cannot agree with the accusation that writing fiction must be doing harm to the method proposed by Confucius (Another

reach the hearts of those people who are not intelligent enough to grasp morality through the form of rational thinking.[10]

Since in the early Han dynasty the Emperor Wudi (ruling period 140-86 B.C.) formally established Confucianism as the official ideology (until the royal court of the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911), the orthodoxy of Confucianism, especially its ethical doctrines, had always been the context of intellectual activities. Speculations over the function of narrative also have had an inextricable relationship with the authority of the Confucian norms. Mainstream critics claim that narrative should either pick up some trivial things for entertaining or translate the ethical doctrines from highbrow terms into popular terms. In both cases, narrative supplements the rational norms and rational norms set up the standard for generalization. However,in this light the theory of narrative is inevitably biased by the dominant rational norms, and can only intensify the tension between the attempt for rational generalization and the tendency that intrinsically resists rational generalization. Narrative has peculiar functions that render it distinct from

Letter Answering Zhang Ji, 257).

[10] This opinion has been explicitly expressed by Xinxin Zi 欣欣子 in his Preface to *Jin Ping Mei*, 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase, written around 1565-1620). He divides people into three hierarchical groups. Although all of them have seven inborn emotions, the persons of the highest group intuitively know how to regulate their emotions with the rhythm of nature; whereas the persons of the second tier know how to release their emotional energy in accordance with rational thinking and thus wouldn't be burdened with emotions. The problem is with the persons on the lowest level. They don't have the natural talent to enjoy their emotions effortlessly and without harm, nor do they have the capacity to rely on the Confucian classics to guide these emotions. This is the slot which novel is supposed to fill, for novels like The Plum in the Golden Vase employ creative language that is enjoyably written in order to demonstrate morality (1).

rational discourse. In the case of Chinese narrative, there are two functions that narrative executes. These functions are not for envisioning the logic already revealed by the rational thinking, but for launching a different way to conceive the world. One is to carry out a dimension that extends beyond the limits of rational thinking. Another is to maintain the individual view in perceiving the breadth and the depth of life, including emotional reactions toward the contemplated world.

First, narrative incarnates a dimension. This dimension sustains a perception that cannot be explained away by analytic thinking without losing its integrality. Things recounted in narrative maintain not only their vividness but their vitality. To illustrate this point, the narration of strange things is probably one of the best examples.

Since its earliest stages, one of the main subgenres of Chinese fiction is comprised of stories that tell strange things. This genre is called *zhi guai xiao shuo* 志怪小說 (fictions that recounts strange things). What are strange things? What make things strange? They are the qualities that cannot be convincingly reasoned away if we merely follow the logic of rational thinking. In the Chinese tradition, these qualities are related to supernatural things and unexpected happenings. A notable prototype of this kind of narrative is myth.

The way the ancient thinkers interpret myths illustrates the point I am trying to make. Myth reveals how incompetent rational thinking is when it explicates a narrative within the domain of its own formulas. As Yuan Ke 袁珂 observes in his *Zhongguo Gudai Shenhua* 中國古代神話 (The Mythology in Ancient China), one of the reasons for the dispersion of

mythology in China is that, starting with Confucius himself (551-479 B.C.), there has been a persistent effort by Confucian scholars to rationalize myths (19). For instance, there are two famous figures in Chinese myths. One is the Yellow Emperor (*huang di*, 黃帝, a mythical and legendary figure; also one of the earliest tribal leaders who conquered some other tribes and established the first unified country in the Chinese nation), the other is *Kui* (夔, a name for both a dragon and a person). According to the myths, the Yellow Emperor is the highest god and has a head with four faces. Each side of his head has a pair of eyes looking in one of the four directions. Therefore, he is able to know simultaneously the things happening in every corner of the universe. One day, when Zi Gong 子貢, one of Confucius's disciples, asked Confucius if it was possible that the ancient Yellow Emperor had four faces, Confucius answered that it was merely a misinterpretation of the text. Although the original phrase "the Yellow Emperor four faces" (黃帝四面) would be normally interpreted as "the Yellow Emperor *has* four faces" in accordance with the syntax of the ancient Chinese, it might also be interpreted as "the Yellow Emperor is facing four directions." Therefore, it should be understood as the Yellow Emperor had sent officials in four directions to govern the country (*Shi Zi* 尸子, Shizi 28). In this type of Confucian thinking, there is no room for a mythical imagination which can actually be incarnated by narratives.

The other instance is related to *Kui*. In the myths, *Kui* is the name for both a special dragon and the music commissioner at the court of Emperor Shun (舜, one of the earliest emperors in ancient China). It is said that there was certain a relationship between this dragon and this commissioner, and both of them had only one leg and one foot. According to *Lushi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Lu by Lu Buwei 呂不韋 (?-235

B.C.), when Confucius was asked by the king of the Lu State about how the music commissioner *Kui* could have only one foot, Confucius again took advantage of the linguistic ambiguity to explain the mythical imagination away. He maintained that the phrase "*Kui* one foot" (kui yi zu, 夔一足) did not necessarily mean that *Kui* had only one foot. For in the Chinese language the word *zu* (足) could mean "foot" but also could mean "to be enough." Since a person who was born with only one leg and one foot, like a fish with one tail was a very rare case, this saying should have been explained as " a single one *Kui* would be enough since he was so good in his profession" (848: 475). Both of these instances show that, in the attempt of interpretation there is a insurmountable barrier between the narrative imagination in the form of myth and rational thinking.

Confucius, certainly a thinker of great wisdom, must have sensed the awkwardness in this rationalization of strangeness. Moreover, he was also a tolerant sage. He did not advocate forbidding the recounting of strange things. The strategy he employs is to ignore the possible existence of the things which rational thought cannot explain. As his disciples report, Confucius dismissed talk related to oddities, supernatural powers, freakishness and deities (Analects 12).[11] This attitude sets up the pattern adopted by most Chinese scholars during the last two thousand years. Nevertheless, the need to entertain through the narrative imagination cannot be easily banished simply by ignoring its existence.

In China, novels created by individual writers appear rather belatedly.[12] However, some learned scholars made strenuous efforts to collect

[11] 子不語怪，力，亂，神.

[12] It is commonly agreed that the first mature form of individually-created

and compile stories related to the things which were purposely neglected by Confucians. The scholars also try to justify their efforts by arguing about the concept of strangeness. In his Preface to *Shanhai Jing* 山海經 (The Book of Mountains and Seas), a collection including many ancient myths and legends, Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324) argues:

> There is nothing that is strange by its own nature. Things appear strange only after there is a person involved. As a matter of fact, the idea of strangeness is in one's mind, it is not that things themselves are strange";[13] "to indulge in the things that occur habitually and to singularize the rarely-heard things as oddity, those are the common weaknesses of human nature.[14] (1042:3).

The notion of strangeness is an aberration from the normal patterns people have perceived repeatedly. Rational norms are the abstractions of the common patterns. When things happen in ways that are beyond rational expectations, when things are tinted by the conceiver's imagination in such a way that cracks the shell of the mind, people are tempted to consider them strange. Unable to be elevated to the analytic level, these things have been sustained on the perceptive level by narrative. In this sense, narrative is another way of thinking and is not inferior to rational thinking. Ge Hong 葛洪 (ca. 281-341), the author of *Shenxian Zhuan* 神仙傳 (Biographies of Gods and Immortals), states that the stories he has written are not meant to be shown to those persons who are vulgar or who cannot master the way of

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novels occurred in the Tang dynasty (618-907). It is a cluster of stories recounting strange episodes (*tang chuan qi*, 唐傳奇).

[13] 物不自異，待我而異. 異果在我，非物異也.

[14] 夫玩所習見，而奇所希聞，此人情之常蔽也.

sophisticated thinking (1509: 257).[15]

Besides its perceptual integrality, as a thinking mode narrative distinguishes itself from analytic reasoning in another way. Narrative is an intent to formulate a way to counteract the thinking tracks biased by orthodox ideology.[16] Unlike the natural sciences, the value of a school in the social sciences does not lie in its objectivity but in the peculiar way it postulates and guides people's thinking. In ancient China, backed up by royal regimes, politically Confucianism assumed an overwhelming power over people's thinking. This power particularly penetrated the habit of rationalization. In other words, whenever people started to analyze their experiences in order to achieve certain rational conclusions, more often than not they were tempted to follow the postulates of Confucian scholars and measured their own conclusions against what was already stated in the Confucian classics. There was rarely any other theoretical perspective available to facilitate people's rational thinking in some other direction. The lack of rapport between experience and educated rational thinking is one of reasons that people are apt to reach mature thinking on the perceptual level. Moreover, there is a belief that encourages them to do so. Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465-422), the most famous literary theorist in Chinese history, in his *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Mind and Crafts in Literature) maintains "when the principle of thinking

[15] 其系俗之徒，思不經微者，亦不强以示之.

[16] In 1960s political turmoil, when the Chairman of the Communist Party Mao Zedong (毛澤東) launched a campaign to purge his political rivals, he blamed them as using literature as a means to counter against his own thoughts. He declared that using novels to accomplish the anti-Party intrigue was a significant invention. As a matter of fact, using narrative as a channel to formulate unorthodox thinking is an old practice of the intelligentsia in Chinese society.

assumes its subtlety, the spirit wanders with things" (493).[17] Another way of saying this is that, without the inspirational images of perceptible things, there is no way to reach a subtlety in thinking. To organize this kind of thinking into a discursive body turns out to be one of the functions of narrative.

When Gan Bao 干寶 (fl.317-322) wrote the Preface to his *Soushenji* 搜神記 (Notes on Exploring the Supernatural), he declared that historians should allow room for different viewpoints and that the common flaw in the extant historical writings was to deny the diversity of recordings and opinions.[18] He stated that the theme of his book was exactly the opposite of this (1042:366). Unlike factual recordings of historical events, geographical features, social conventions and cultural rituals, fictional stories not only record gossip, hearsay, folk tales, jokes, anecdotes, historical episodes and people's deeds, but also preserve a certain way of looking at them. There is an illuminative instance on this matter. In the Taiping period of the Song dynasty (976-984), the emperor Taizong ordered Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) and other scholars to compile two grand encyclopedias. One is the 1,000-chapter compendium *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽 (Taiping Royal Reference Book), which is arranged according to subjects and collects related information from more than 2,000 books. Most of the entries are fragmentary descriptions of certain items; some of them are biographical information taken mostly from official histories. The information is supposed to be factual. In the emperor Taizong's own words, this work should record those references that can be readily used to improve the moral atmosphere and reinforce the Confucian discipline (Li

[17] 思理為妙，神與物遊.

[18] 將使事不二跡，言無異途， 然後為信者，固亦前史之所病.

Fang, Reference Book, 3).[19] Due to its usefulness to the sovereignty, before the book was completed, the Emperor ordered that on every single day three chapters should be presented to him for reviewing. The other encyclopedia is a 500-chapter anthology of stories: *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 (Taiping Comprehensive Compilation of Stories). This is a collection of fictional stories taken from the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) to the beginning of Song Dynasty (around the last years of the 10th century). Its resources are comprised of as many as 475 books. Stories in this book are categorized under such rubrics as immortals, strange monks, the habit of drinking, making friends, greed, humor, rebirth, treasures, etc. The names of the protagonists are the titles of most pieces. In other words, the stories are character-centered. Also led by Li Fang, several scholars spent two years completing this work. However, in contrast to the fate of the Taiping Royal Reference Book, it was not put into print at that time even though the printing plates had already been made. The ostensible reason was that someone claimed the book was not pertinent to the need of scholars. Nevertheless, there seems to be another explanation that is more relevant. According to Li Fahg's report, when the emperor Taizong ordered the compilation of this book, the initial motive was to collect different opinions and to promote even those things that only have minor value (Compilation, 1).[20] Yet after doing so, these stories must have made the Emperor feel so unconformable that he decided to put the printing plates away in storage. If one reads the stories in this collection, it is quite obvious that many opinions conveyed in the stories on certain matters and persons are conspicuously different from the orthodox versions in reporting

[19] 凡諸故事可資風教者悉記之.

[20] 博綜群言，不遺眾善.

on the same matters and persons. In 1566 when a new edition of this anthology was published, the publisher Tai Kai 談愷 pointed out that only a few people knew this book existed. The reason was that this book is merely connected to the "small truth" (Ibid. 2). The concept of "small truth" (*xiao dao* 小道) is obviously contrast to the Confucian doctrines which are generally referred to as the "grand way" (*da dao* 大道). It is no coincidence that the unorthodox "small truth" occurs in the form of narrative as a perceptual way to reach people's minds.

Another unique function of narrative is to maintain an individual perspective when perceiving the breadth and the depth of life, including emotional reactions to the contemplated world. There are two things which scholars in ancient China commonly regard as the content of novel. One is *wu* 物 or *shi* 事. Both terms mean things, matters, affairs, appearances, occurrences, episodes, events and substances that are outside the person who conceives them. The other is *qing* 情. It means feelings, anxieties, emotions, passions and affections that are within the person. More often than not, these two concepts combine to form a new concept *qingshi* 情事 or *wuqing* 物情. Instead of the meaning of things *and* feelings, this new concept has a further implication. The first form means things related to the aroused emotions. As Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) observes, fictions in the Tang dynasty contains some small pieces of *qingshi* 情事 that are very touching (1: 64).[21] In the latter form it means things described in a way that includes one's intellectual understanding of and emotional reactions to them. In his Preface to Chen Bangjun's 陳邦俊 *Guangxie Shi* 廣諧史 (An Extended History of Humor: A

[21] 唐人小說，不可不熟，小小情事，淒惋欲絕，洵有神遇而不自知者，與詩律可稱一代之奇.

Collection of Fables), Li Rihua 李日華 (1565-1635) points out that one merit of this work is that the descriptions of *wuqing* 物情 are as vivid as one sees them with his or her own eyes (1: 174).[22] In both cases, the author's personal reaction to the contemplated events serves as a key device that regulates the trajectory of the narrative act from the factual events to the textual narration.

In the Chinese philosophical tradition, it is a common understanding that there is a dialectical relationship between the image of the observed thing and the feeling aroused by it. This relationship reflects itself in the dual meaning of the word *qing* 情. Besides meaning feeling, anxiety, emotion, passion or affection, etymologically, this word also means situations, circumstances, conditions or states of affairs.[23] The thing one has seen affects his or her emotional reaction to the situation; whereas the emotional reaction to the object contemplated helps the viewer form a personal perspective to look into things and form a framework to recount them. Unlike a poet who recounts things in order to facilitate the self-expression of subjective emotions, a novelist registers his or her emotional reactions in order to provide a perspective to get into the depth of the things while observing the objective world. Thus, the same *qing* 情 performs different functions in poetry and narrative. When Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602) made his comments on *Shuihu Zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), he maintained that if the author had not been emotionally agitated, he would have never formed the

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22 描繪物情，宛然若睹.

23 For instance, in *Zhou Zhuan* 左傳 (Annals with Commentary by Zuo Qiuming), one of the earliest history books in China (written in the period from 550-450 B.C.), there is a passage recounting the King's saying, "although I could not acquire every detail in all cases of judicial affairs, whenever I made a judgment, I always took the situation (*qing*) into consideration" (35. 小大之獄，雖不能察，必以情).

intent and perspective to compose this literary masterpiece (1:142).[24] The author's mood caused by the observed situation strengthens a perspective from which the sensory data is organized to divulge conceptual messages.

At the early historical stages of the Chinese novel, the creation of a fictional story is meant to incarnate the narrator's perspective rather than to provide information related to the narrated events. Besides *zhigui xiaoshuo* 志怪小說 (the fictions telling strange things), there is another important subgenre in Chinese fiction which is called *zhiren xiaoshuo* 志人小說. These are fictions that focus on featuring idiosyncratic deeds, manners, morals and mentalities of particular persons. This type of fiction projects particular ways in which the narrator evaluates the described characters. To the reader, the things a character does is not as relevant as the way in which these things have been presented. The most significant example of the earliest *zhiren xiaoshuo* 志人小說 we have so far seen is *Shishuo Xinyu* 世說新語 (A New Account of Tales of the World) by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444).[25] Much of the material in this book is taken from other books, mostly from historical writings. In other words, these stories are familiar to readers. However, the writer reorganizes them into 36 groupings such as merit, oratory, political affairs, erudition, forbearance, taste, judgment, etc., and supplements some of these short accounts with heard anecdotes to reinforce the points he wants to make. The making of the book is strongly influenced by the intellectual

[24] 水滸傳者，發憤之所作也.

[25] Although according to historical record, before this book there had been two other works of the same kind (one is *Yu Lin*, 語林 [Collected Tales] by Pei Qi 裴啟; the other is *Guo Zi* 郭子 by Guo Chengzhi 郭澄之), there are only few pieces of these two earlier works we can find, which are scattered in some works like *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 (Taiping Comprehensive Compilation of Stories).

atmosphere of the writer's time. At that time, the intelligentsia indulged themselves in the fashion of speculative thinking (*xuan xue* 玄學) and were obsessed with the habit of evaluating people hierarchically. Each account of A New Account of Tales of the World implies a twofold layer of judgment. One part of the authorial judgment is the categorical reference of evaluations such as merit and erudition; the other part is the evaluation of the particular person involved. Both of these judgment reveal themselves in the unfolding of the story. The narrator's perspective gives the stories a new twist and makes them last longer than they do in the original sources. When the book was reprinted in 1535, in his Preface Yuan Jiong 袁褧 observed that in this work, "the verbal expression is neutral but the intent is profound; the things are trivial but the meaning is deep" (Liu Yiqing, 932).[26] The profundity of the narrative lies in the intent of the narrator that reveals itself in the seemingly neutral narration; the depth of the meaning consists not in the things themselves but in the way these "trivial things" are presented.

What makes a narrator's perspective distinct from mere theoretical speculation is its complexity. Complexity characterizes a person's life experience before it has been theorized. It is easy to make some black-and-white judgment about some moral issue if one only thinks theoretically; but it is not so easy to ignore all the ambivalent feelings and moot points that are so prevalent in real life. The narrative perspective is not so much engaged in lecturing the reader about righteousness as it is concerned with offering the reader a way to view life which through its complexity reveals its profundity and subtlety. In ancient Chinese philosophical thinking, there is always a

[26] 或詞冷而趣遠，或事瑣而意異.

part that believes in the intuitive comprehension of the world. In *Yi Ching* 易經 (The Book of Changes), a classic book "providing access to the deepest recesses of the 'Chinese mind' and embodying the very essence of Chinese culture" (Schwartz, 390), it is said that the universe is made of fine air,[27] the change of the fine air never stops in certain fixed forms and operates in a way that divides it into the pole of negative (*yin*陰) and the pole of positive (*yang* 陽).[28] There is a resonance between the essence of the universe and the Sages' understandings of it. However, the meaning of the universe that embodies itself in the Sages' understandings is too profound to be grasped by mere verbal expressions. With written language it is even worse.[29] Therefore, the Sages tried to illustrate a way to get to the essence of the universe through the interpretation of visual signs and imaginable images (38-44).[30] Thus, even in rational thinking, Chinese philosophers are not so eager to elaborate the precise meaning of each philosophical term, since virtually no such conceptual precision is possible. As Stephen Owen observes, this is a phenomenon unique to Chinese culture. It is alien to a reader in the Western world, where the quest for definition has been one of the deepest and most enduring projects (5). This common belief is one of the reasons that most ancient Chinese thinkers heavily rely on the interpretation of fables and other stories as a major way of reasoning. Nevertheless, there is still a difference in Chinese thought between narrative and rational thinking in grasping the complexity of comprehension.

In ancient philosophical texts, such as *Zhuang Zi* 莊子, a work

27 精氣為物.

28 故神無方而易無體，一陰一陽之謂道.

29 書不盡言，言不盡意.

30 聖人有以見天下之賾，而擬諸其形容，象其物宜，是故謂之象.

notorious for using stories to illustrate abstract tenets, the stories are told in such a way that the meaning of each story narrows to manifest of a single point. All the clues that may lead to other directions have been purposefully left out. Sometimes this point has been stated explicitly as the conclusion of the story. Sometimes the author arranges several stories in one chapter, projecting the intended point by their overlapping meaning. Stories themselves are not important, but are only the tools to elevate the reader to an abstract meaning which cannot be clearly defined by language. The reader is encouraged to ignore the data embodied in language, abandoning the vessel of language after one comprehends the meaning. In Zhuang Zi's words, if you have already caught the fish, there is no point in keeping the tackle (4: 944).[31] In contrast, narrative employs another tactic. Narrative is an art that presents a story, and the body of the story consists of sensory data. The characters, the plot and the narration constantly draw the reader's attention to the things on the sensorial level which cannot be replaced by thinking on the abstract level. The narration reveals the narrator's viewpoint but leaves room for further reflection. The story presents itself as an object that encourages different readers to draw their own conclusions, even in the case that an authorial statement already exists. Unlike the story used in philosophical argument that aims to illustrate a single point, the story in narrative creates a space to accommodate the need to understand the world as it appears to our perception. The narrator's perspective is the framework that builds this space.

There is another aspect to the complexity concerning the narrator's

[31] 荃者所以在魚，得魚而忘荃; ... 言者所以在意，得意而忘言.

perspective. In a narrative the narrator's perspective normally does not assert itself a straightforward manner. It may partially identify with a certain character's viewpoint, but generally the manifestation of the narrator's perspective is completed through the fabrication of various viewpoints of different characters. If we compare the stories in Zhuang Zhi and that in A New Account of Tales in the World, it is not difficult to reach the following conclusion. In the stories used for philosophical argument, there is always the voice of either a character or an observer that is identical with the author's perspective. In contrast, in a fictional narrative, even if the narrator clearly leans toward the attitude of a particular character, if readers intend to discern the narrator's perspective, they still need to take account of characters' attitudes toward the same matter. In addition, they still need to know the relationship of a particular character's attitude towards other characters, even if this relationship is only referred to indirectly . This complexity will reach its full development in the novels in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Now, let us move to the second issue, the conflict between factual truthfulness and fictional truthfulness. This is an issue over which Chinese critics have been arguing about for more than two thousand years.

Truthfulness is a value which is highly prized in Chinese civilization. More often than not, the critique of fictional narrative focuses on its essential falsehood. In the Tang dynasty, when Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579-648) wrote *Jin Shu* 晉書 (A History of the Jin Dynasty [265-420]), he thus comments on Gao Bao's 干寶 *Shoushen Ji* 搜神記 (Notes on Exploring the Supernatural): "[it] assembles those things of the same nature as well as those of different natures, and thus blends the facts with those things that lack evidence in reality" (4: 2150).[32] In the Qing dynasty, another well-known historian

Zhang Xuecheng (章學誠 , 1738-1801) utters the same opinion on the novel Three Kingdoms, complaining that in this novel only seventy-percent of the content is based on historical facts, and the rest is merely fiction. Readers thus have constantly been misled (44).[33] In both their opinions, the novel's drawback is its fictionalization, which produces false versions of factual occurrences and obstructs the comprehension of the truth. Factually, however, even in the case of historical writing, no matter how brilliant a historian is, he or she can never record all facts without making selections, even if the subject relates to a very simple matter. In the tradition of Chinese historiography, the history is supposed to be written in a manner that will teach the current and coming rulers how to govern the country. In other words, the facts are purposely elaborated in order to illustrate the righteousness of Confucian doctrines. Facts are indeed events that have actually occurred in history. Truthfulness in this case only seems to be rooted in factuality, and sets a contrast to the fictionality that results from the imaginative faculties. However, it is only a surface truthfulness. What lies underneath this truthfulness are still educated rational principles.

The defenders of the novel also emphasize the value of truthfulness, but they have a different interpretation of the concept of truthfulness. They claim that truthfulness doesn't lie in the exactness of imitation or the factuality of narrated events. Under the appearance of everything, there is a vitality which they call *shen* 神. *Shen* 神 is the word standing for god, deity, divinity and the supernatural. It also means juice, spirit, essence, vigor and the hidden energy, etc. *Shen* 神 reveals itself in the way that people show

32 傳采異同，遂混虛實.

33 三國演義則七分實事，三分虛構，以觀者往往為所惑亂.

their spirits through their eyes. In these critics' opinion the only way to grasp and convey *Shen* 神 is through fictionalization. In his book *Baishi Huibian* 稗史匯編 (Collected Unofficial Historical Writings, 1607), Wang Qi 王圻 contends that for a novel, "if there is no fictionalization, then there is no liveliness" (3: 1559).[34] In his Preface to the anthology of short stories *Erke Panan Jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Astonishment II, edited by Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 [1580-1644]), Shuixiang Jushi 睡鄉居士 suggests that in the novels like *Xiyou Ji* 西遊記 (Journey to the West), fictionalization purposely is used to maintain truthfulness, by communicating the essence of things as we grasps one's spirit through the eyes (1: 266).[35] Likewise, in the Preface to Tu Shen's 屠紳 (1744-1801) *Tan Shi* 蟫史 (Stories of the Bookworm), Duling Nanzi 杜陵男子 postulates that "the thinking that doesn't stretch itself into the magnitude of fictionalization is incapable of comprehending the metamorphosis of the universe" (1: 3).[36] These opinions show despite its seeming distortions, fictionalization provides a more adequate access to the truthfulness of things than does the strict imitation of factual events.

Fictionalization is a dual process. It both attaches the imagination to reality and releases it from the tangle of niggling incidents that blocks the mind's ability to penetrate into the quintessence behind the screen. Chinese critics repeatedly postulate this principle as operating behind the process of fictionalization. In their opinion, after one has spent ten years strenuously speculating on a certain matter, at some particular moment, the issue itself

[34] 惟虛故活耳.

[35] 正以幻中有真，乃為傳神阿堵.

[36] 夫思不入幻者，不足以窮物之變.

may suddenly grab the thinker, using his mind to create those things that may have not actually happened but should have been there according to the cogency hidden in the speculations. Fictional figures are invented, but they are just as real as and may outlast those people we encounter in our daily lives. In Li Rihua's 李日華 words, fiction means creating certain figures to convey what the author sees through the mind's eye; however, if we trace the deeds of these invented characters down to the bottom, it is not hard to conceive that every single thing that happens in the fiction can find its prototype in reality. In this sense, fictionalization has the right to claim truthfulness (1: 174).[37]

Another issue related to the truthfulness in fictionalization is textualization. Fictionalization emerges between what should have happened and what has really occurred. It sustains the author's understanding of the narrated events. What embodies the process of fictionalization is text. Since the very beginning, in Chinese critical thinking, there has always been a layer of text between the narrated world and the narration which is called *wen* 文. Because of this layer, critics can explain how storytellers cannot only record events and episodes, but also can record certain attitudes and emotional reactions to the recorded events and episodes; not only to maintain the complexity of a person's experience, but also to fabricate different viewpoints within a single verbal construction. Working with the potential of this layer, one cannot only recount the things left over by history books, but also get to the deep essence of things. Therefore, as the well-known critic Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608-1661) points out, it is really wonderful to see text as a thing that has its own unique nature (Commentary 298).[38] Shen Jiji 沈既濟

[37] 借形以托者，虛也;而反若一一可按者，不能不屬之實.

[38] 今夫文章之為物，豈不異哉!

(ca. 750-800) is one of the writers who wrote strange stories in the Tang dynasty; *Renshi Zhuan*任氏傳 ("The Story of Lady Ren") is one of these. In this story he observes, "a knowledgeable writer must be able to carve the fundamentals of changes, conceive what lies between divinity and human nature, and create texts that elegantly convey things and feelings with consequence and subtlety" (10: 219-220).[39]

Texts themselves possess the nature of factuality. There are also historical relationships among texts. Texts consist of a world. This world runs parallel to the world of historical facts and contains insight into the germ behind these facts and the relationship between the observer and the observed. When Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 tries to compare the novel The Water Margin with Sima Qian's history book Records of the Historian, he makes a shrewd comment about the difference between historical writings and novels, by maintaining, "Records of the Historian employs text to bear witness to events, whereas Water Margin manipulates events for the need of text" (1: 291).[40] Fictionalization grasps the truth of the factual world as the author understands it, and thus also upholds the spirit of the author's relationship to the world described. Text incarnates the truth and the spirit in a material form. The creation of a new fictional text will not only take its content from the factual world, but also refer to the truth and the spirit carried in previous texts. Besides the relationships among the described events themselves, the coherence of the truth and spirit carried in the text also forms a demand for the organization of new materials. In this sense, we may conclude that texts

[39] 向使淵雋之士，必能揉變化之理，察神人之際，著文章之美，　傳要妙之情.

[40] 史記是以文運事，水滸是因文生事.

even has the upper hand over factual events in regard to truthfulness.

The Chinese narrative practices and theoretical speculations on narrative we have discussed so far existed long before they encountered narrative practices and theories from the West.[41] In this essay the purpose of keeping them indigenous is to make the argument more convincing. It is clear that in the history of Chinese literature, there has been a consistent effort to define the genre of narrative. The central reason for the necessity of this genre is the perceptual integrality it sustains. And the central factor that enables a narrative to sustain its integrality is the narrator. The narrator of a narrative holds a unique perspective, which not only allows the interplay of diverse voices within a verbal expression, but also challenges the monopoly of the ideological orthodoxy. Some critics realize that the concept of text lies in the understanding of the nature of narrative. This realization leads to questions about the relationships between narrative and language. Critics also endeavor to spell out the generic characteristics of narrative. The notion of genre is important for both the writer and the reader, as it involves the expectations and interpretations which a reading public certainly have in receiving narratives.

The narrator's perspective, language and genre: these are the recurring issues we come across in our inquires into the nature of narrative in both the West and the East. These are, therefore, the subjects I will discuss in the following three chapters.

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[41] The intentional introduction of the western literary theory and novels started at the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The persons who initiated this movement were Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) in theory and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1837-1929) and Yan Fu 嚴复 (1853-1921) in translation.

2. The Narrator's Perspective: the Frame of Narrative Experience

The Narrator's Perspective and the Autonomy of Narrative

Narrative consists of discourses but is not itself a discourse. Rather, it is a verbal expression whose conceptual dimension exceeds the periphery of the notion of discourse.

The relationship of narrative to discourse is analogous to the relationship of discourse to language. A discourse is a particularly organized and regulated unit of language. A discourse is not merely a sentence, even though it appears in the form of a sentence or sentences. In a given circumstance, the concept of discourse involves understanding the relationship between the speaker and the recipient. Discourse functions on a level which cannot be adequately explained by a general linguistic analysis of language. As an ongoing method of communication, a discourse conveys the speaker's attitude, considers the recipient, and brings the relevant intercourses to bear upon this particular utterance. It is true that without manipulating language a discourse cannot carry out its functions. However, the knowledge engendered by a discourse draws the observer's attention away from the meaning offered by a linguistic analysis of its elements. The meaning of a discourse consists of but not in language. Language is capable of eliciting a response in another person but has no ability to constrain the recipient's response. For instance, we may consider the line "the dark is

melting" a sentence or a discourse. In viewing it as a sentence, we may understand that the darkness in question is turning into a lighter color, or, metaphorically, that some dark mood has been softened, etc. As far as we have not violated the linguistic rules of this particular language, all interpretations are valid. When we talk about language, we talk about a one-way method of communication. In contrast, when we talk about discourse, we take account of the recipient's response as well as the speaker's intention. In this case, to know the rules that govern language itself is not enough. We need also to know the social circumstance in which the language is used. When we talk about the "meaning" of a discourse, we refer to something like an expected result from the interaction between the utterer and the recipient. The meaning of a discourse, though supposedly constrained from both ends, does not necessarily coincide with the sender's expectation Moreover, a given discourse has relationships with other relevant discourses. To organize language into a discourse is a way to institutionalize it. Besides the interrelationships among divided units within a particular discourse, the language in a discourse has various relationships with the language textualized in other discourses. In her poem "Event," Sylvia Plath says, "The dark is melting. We touch like cripples" (195). Given the situation, the darkness mentioned here certainly appears as a conceptual black gap in which the poet was metaphorically dismembered. This image leads us to the social and intellectual milieu in the 1960s when the poet was living, the poem was composed, and the subject of darkness was discussed. To textualize is to institutionalize language; to institutionalize language is to transform sentences into discourses. The meaning of a discourse would not surface

unless we pay attention to its speaker, recipient and the relevant intercourses informing it.

Narrative is a cluster of integrated discourses. Paradigmatically, the conceptual scope in which narrative functions is at a level higher than that of discourse. The principles we rely on in analyzing discourses are not always valid when applied to the analysis of narrative. There are two major factors behind this. First, a narrative (storytelling) circumscribes a communicative scope in which different discourses may maintain their own voices. As mentioned above, what makes a communicative discourse different from a linguistic sentence is its relationship to the speaker, the recipient and other relevant intercourses. Although a discourse may be comprised of many sentences, although different recipients' understandings of the speaker's statement may be strikingly diverse, a discourse is only supposed to convey a single voice: the speaker's voice. Even if a discourse appears in the form of a dialogue, as it does in some of Plato's works and in many ancient Chinese philosophical texts, the form of dialogue is merely a rhetorical device to reinforce the argument's force. In contrast, narrative is a setting that maintains the differences between the voices conveyed by different discourses. For instance, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance the whole story is narrated by Miles Coverdale, and his moral outlook and his love toward Prisilla definitely bias his version of the events. However, we can still distinctively hear Hollingsworth, Zenobia and even Westervelt's voices. In "The Art of Fiction," Henry James tells us that in its broadest definition a novel is "a personal, a direct impression of life" (Art of Criticism 170). In this sense, a narrative is a personal utterance. Yet in "The Future of the Novel" James also tells us, "the novel is of all pictures the most comprehensive and the

most elastic" (244). In this sense, a narrative is a vivid painting containing the multifarious nature of both the narrated events and the various attitudes toward these events. Every narration bears a narrator's perspective, which is the internal framework of the narrative. However, the way that the narrator's perspective reveals itself is through the unfolding of the story. Telling a story offers room to different voices of different discourses uttered by different characters. Monologue by nature contradicts narrative. Put another way, a narrative is a verbal expression capable of accommodating a particular need: the need to see the events in which the conflicts between human interests and values extend into a temporary compromise, rather than to learn the solutions offered to the conflicts. The contemplative nature of narrative does not necessarily emanate from the author's intent to be objective. Rather, this contemplation resides in the nature of storytelling.

Another factor that differentiates narrative from discourse is its detachment from both the author and the reader. A discourse is an uttered sentence or a group of uttered sentences. As mentioned above, discourse gains its meaning from its direct connection to the person who has uttered it and to the person who is trying to understand it. In contrast, narrative acquires its relationship to author and reader in a rather indirect way. A narrative is an autonomous entity. It is the narrator's narration rather than the author's. By creating the narrator, to a certain extent, the author distances himself or herself from the narrative. We can read Lord Jim without knowing who the author of the novel is or who Joseph Conrad is, but we cannot read it without knowing about Marlow, who is the narrator of the story. The meaning of a discourse is certainly complicated, the meaning of a narrative is much more

complex. A significant part of this complexity stems from the paradoxical distance between the narrator and the author. This detachment can also be discerned by a narrative's link to the reader. A discourse is intended for a particular recipient. For example, in Plato's Republic, Socrates's discourse is argumentative when he speaks with Thrasymachus, but explanatory when the speeches are addressed to Glaucon. Of course, a narrative's writer always keeps the intended reader in mind. However, after the narrative comes into being, the person who owns the story is the narrator rather than the author. In the author's own mind the reader can only comprise a small portion of the entire audience the narrative will have. Narrators live within narratives. Texts of narratives are objects which exist independently. A narrator lives for much longer than the author. Narrators patiently and persistently repeat their stories as long as there are readers, and resist the attempt to hold some particular reader's response to be the final interpretation of the stories.

The narrator's perspective gives a narrative its structure. Below, I will discuss the narrator's function with regard to its relationship to the author and to the reader. The final two sections of this chapter will discuss Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady and Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中's *Sanguo Yanyi* 三國演義 (Three Kingdoms) as examples, focusing mainly on the role the narrator plays in making narrative an autonomous entity.

Literary theory is heavily loaded with analyses of poetry, as the theory of narrative is conventionally considered an extension of the theory of poetry. Critics keep calling narrative theory the "poetics of narrative." This is not only a question of terminology. Poetics (in its narrow sense) exerts a significant influence on the theory of narrative. To interpret a literary work as an expression of the author's personal emotions and thoughts, as many

works on the "poetics of narrative" have done, results in one of the bedrock concepts which poetics contributed to the theory of narrative. Poetry, as commonly understood, is rhythmic speech. A poem is an utterance by a particular speaker, which delivers a subjective emotional mood. Based on the practice of poetry, it would be logical to infer that understanding the author's intention is the most crucial element for interpreting a literary work. In Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction, he agrees with the theory that regards literary works as the authors' property. Fiction, in his opinion, is essentially a rhetorical device by which the author can manipulate the reader's mind in order to communicate an intended meaning.

In Booth's argument, its relationship to the author is the quintessence of fiction. An author either directly addresses to readers in telling a story, or employs a narrator as the medium in showing a story. In both cases, storytelling is a "rhetorical manipulation" that leads readers to the author's "developing idea" (115, 165). The author's voice is omnipresent. The artifice of narrative is necessary because it provides a viewpoint for the author to present "the mind and heart of a character" (3). The author is present in every speech given by any character (18). His or her voice is never silent, and is one of the reasons that we read fiction (60). No narrator can ever really hold his or her own identity, "because the act of narration as performed by even the most highly dramatized narrator is itself the author's presentation of a prolonged 'inside view' of a character" (18). The author's touch changes the meaning of every so-called literary fact (112). Along with the authorial commentary and judgement which are explicitly stated in a story, such techniques as point of view, authorial silence, and purposeful confusion are

all rhetorical means to control the reader's expectations and interpretations, and thereby reinforce the author's manipulation. For example, Booth claims, that manipulation of dramatized point can convey the author's judgment with great precision (272). Even in novels in which the authors do not speak directly, "the author's voice is still dominant in a dialogue that is at the heart of all experience with fiction" (Ibid). Fiction is an expression directly attached to the author's intention. In various ways narrative techniques help readers receive the author's intended meaning.

The Rhetoric of Fiction is particularly informative for showing that there is a triangular relationship between the author's intention, his or her narrative strategies, and the reader's interpretation. The problem is the assumption that serves as the starting point of Booth's whole discussion. The whole work is built on the assumption that a fictional work is the author's personal statement about the "developing ideas." The first question we have to ask here is why authors of fictions should trouble themselves with the rhetoric of fiction rather than merely write straightforward treatises instead, since both types of writing are intended to deliver the author's developing ideas. It goes without saying that whoever composes a fiction indeed intends to convey certain ideas to readers. However, to choose the form of narrative in which to write is to yield oneself to a position. In this position, the author can only stay behind the story and expect to play a partial and indirect role in affecting the reader's reception. It is the nature of narrative rather than rhetoric that prevents any direct contact between the author and the reader.

In the history of narrative, before authors started to compose novels as personal creations, narrative had already acquired its basic characteristics. There were myths, fables, folklores and other kinds of stories. Writing in this

genre, no matter what an author intends, there are some expectations and conventions that regulate his or her writing. It is not a matter of choice but rather a mater of generic inheritance. For instance, readers expect that one feature of narrative is to entertain. Authors, such as Boccaccio, Cervantes, Fielding and Melville apparently had this purpose in mind while composing their works. The consideration of the reader's taste is a conspicuous factor affecting the rhetoric of fiction, even if it is possibly in conflict with the author's intention to convey his or her ideas more directly.

Cervantes, a founder of the Western novel, makes a profound remark on the relationship between a novelist and his novel. He declares that he is not the father but the "stepfather" of Don Quixote. On the one hand, the novel is the child of his brain; on the other hand, he insists, "I could not counteract Nature's law that everything shall beget its like." Narrative has its own way of coming into being. A novelist cannot manipulate it arbitrarily for the purpose of manipulating the reader. In this sense, Cervantes claims that although he is the author of the novel, his mind only possesses "sterile, uncultivated wit." It has to "beget but the story of a dry, shriveled, eccentric offspring, *full of thoughts of all sorts* and such as never came into any other imagination" (9, my italics). Therefore, to a certain extent, the story tells itself in the author's imagination, and needs the author to gain a lasting life in language, since otherwise it would die. However, if an author made the characters' discourses nothing but a chorus of his or her own voice, the story would be dead before it comes to life. A fictional narrative is "full of thoughts of all sorts." This is another characteristic of narrative. In the relationship of the author to the novel, the central question is his or her relationship to the various thoughts

expressed in and through the novel. If fiction is only a rhetorical device rendering good service to the author's intentional thoughts, then different thoughts in a novel can only be pieces of the mosaic orchestrating the intended ideas. The reader should interpret them exactly in the way the author expects. The author's relationship to these thoughts is therefore a relationship between the manipulator and those who are manipulated. If this is the case, then a novel can only be "full of rhetorical expressions of one mind," but can never be "full of thoughts of all sorts."

A narrative is a framed movement. In a narrative, instead of using characters, events and episodes to show his or her intended ideas, the author shows his or her interaction with the described characters, episodes and events while unfolding them. The significance of Flaubert's novels, in a sense, does not lie in the way in which these works demonstrate the possibility of an impersonal imitation in fiction, but in the attempt to appropriate the author's position in the genre of the novel. Flaubert's novels cause us to realize that an author of novel hardly has the power to manipulate a character or even the narrator as his or her own mouthpiece. We know there is an author who wrote the novel, but we also know that the same author has different intellectual and emotional reactions to the characters and episodes described in the novel, and that these reactions have inevitably affected his or her description of these characters and episodes. Therefore, with the narration we expect to perceive an integral relationship between the author's reactions and interactions. Poets may indulge their needs to express his or her emotions, and select and arrange episodes accordingly. In contrast, novelists lack this privilege. A novelist has to rely on dialogues with thoughts uttered in the voices other than his or her own. In the form of dialogue the making

of narrative provides the author with a latitude which enables the presentation of the authorial reactions to the described events. Instead of the directness of the intended ideas, what makes a narration significant is the insight which the author shows through the various dialogues. In narrative, the author's comments or judgments do not necessarily assume profundity. As a matter fact, in reading a modern novel, the reader is induced to read an author's direct comments or judgments in an ironic manner. Having presented his or her own interpretation of the story, a novelist actually sets up an example for readers, encouraging them to interpret the story as they understand it. In certain cases, some novelists, like James Joyce in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, purposefully employ some textual devices, such as italics, to indicate that some particular sentences or paragraphs are meant to be read as if they were not written by the author and thus are free from context of the authorial intrusion. Furthermore, as Booth observes in using the concept of "the implied author," in the novel the author understood by the reader is not necessarily the author who actually wrote the novel. More often than not, the intentions of the original author and the conceived author are divergent. Therefore, there are at least two parts in the reader's apprehension which need to be disentangled if one wants to stay aware of the original author's intended ideas. One part involves the story and the author's interaction with the story; the other involves the author as conceived in the text and the author who is retrieved from historical references. It seems to me that the triangular relationship among the story, the conceived author and the retrieved author is a resource for interpretive energy. In this sense, it is not sound enough to assert that great fiction stems from the implied author's

emotions and judgments (Booth, 86).

The relationship between the narrator and the conceived author is a key issue for understanding the distance between the narrative and the author. To Booth, the implied author is the original author's "implied image" (75). It includes "the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole," i.e., "not only the extractable meanings but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all of the characters." He insists, "the chief value to which *this* implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form" (73-74, the author's italics). Since it is an image based on "intuitive apprehension," it is thus an "interpreted image" rather than an "implied image." In other words, its connections to the story and the reader are much stronger than the connection to the original author. Readers don't need to know the original author in order to build an image of the conceived author. What they know is the narrator, who gives them the story. The way in which the story is told enables readers to locate the center at which their understanding of the authorial interactions with the story merge together. Mostly, it is the critic who enriches the reader's understanding of the link between the conceived author and the retrieved author. However, as Booth observes, in the case that the reader doesn't know what values the original author initially committed to the story, the narrative can still assert its function in a certain way and allow the reader to form an implied author who might be in a position contradictory to that of the original one.

The divergence between the conceived author and the retrieved author not only problematizes the assertion that a narrative should be understood as a personal expression, but also questions the extent of the original author's

intellectual perspective. For this divergence introduces to the reader's understanding of the conceived author within a broader cultural dimension. In reading The Age of Innocence, we do not necessarily follow Edith Wharton's reminiscent and shrewdly ambivalent view when seeing the New York society in the 1870s. Instead, we may integrate our knowledge of the described events with our understanding of Wharton's attitudes and emotions to the events. There is hardly any evidence to confirm that the image of the author thus formed by the reader is identical with the image in Wharton's own mind.

Michel Foucault realizes that the incompatibility between the conceived author (which he calls the author) and the retrieved author (which he calls the writer) allows us to put the concept of the author in a broader cultural background. To Foucault, "the author does not precede the works" (118-119). He or she operates as a certain functional principle. This principle regulates the circulation and transformation of cultural significations related to a group of texts which are attributed to the author's name. "The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society" (108). Thus, the author's particular thinking, emotions and ideas at a particular time while writing a particular fiction, is not as important as his or her role in integrating and generating the social and cultural significations through the combination of all his or her works.

Foucault's notion of the author is insightful. However, his argument contains a logical fallacy. On the one hand, Foucault maintains that one of the reasons that today's writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression is that "without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is

identified with its own unfolded exteriority." In other words, "it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier" (102).[42] Writing is an interplay of language. Instead of producing the notion of the author, it creates a space "into which the writing subject constantly disappears" (ibid). On the other hand, although the author's name does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced it, "the name seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being (107). In other words, the existence of the author is a precondition of the interplay of language. In Foucault's reasoning, the author mainly emerges from an understanding of discursive language. This is why "the author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture" (ibid). Therefore, Foucault first contradicts himself in claiming that an exterior existence is necessary for the interplay of signs that is supposed to be "identified with its own unfolded exteriority"; then he contradicts himself again in insisting that the author as a result of the language interplay should be the precondition of this very same interplay. Foucault uses some fiction for his examples. In the case of fiction, the reason that he traps himself is his ignorance of the narrator who is the medium between the conceived author and the retrieved author.

There are two reasons that the notion of the narrator is crucial for understanding the relationship between the conceived author and the retrieved author. One, a narrator provides a footing for the author's

[42] The other reason, according to Foucault, is writing's relationship with death (102-103).

detachment from the narrative. This is one of the rationales for a narrative's freeing itself from the dimension of expression. Two, a narrator prevents the narrative from turning into a unconstrained language play. Within a narrative, there is always a narrator who assumes mastery over the thus-organized language. It is the narrator who is identified with the narrative's unfolding exteriority. Without language, the narrator is invisible. However, whenever there is an expression of language in the form of narrative, there is a narrator. A narrative is a synthesis of language-embodied movements. These movements include the unfolding of the story; the author's interaction with the characters (along with their feelings, emotions and thinking), episodes, events in the story; the communication between the story and the reader through language that bears social conventions; the floating strands of potentiality in searching for a network of broader values; and the language interplay in the generic form, etc. Situated at the center of these movements is the narrator. A narrator is a link between the author and the language. It is the narrator who demystifies the paradox in the relationship between the author's signifying intention in using language and the self-defining nature of language as the sign of signifier. The narrator is the framing structure for the narrative movements. Rather than Kafka, the person telling the story of Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect is the center who organizes various experiences around the story, including Kafka's own experience. The existence of the narrator grants the narrative the possibility of transcending the limits of the author's personal experience by internalizing these various experiences in a broader cultural extent.

The issue that immediately follows the given detachment of a narrative from its author is the question about the reader's relationship to the narrative.

The complexity of the relationship between the author and the narrative opens a way for the reader to participate in the creation of meaning. For in each particular case the notion of the conceived author largely relies on the mind of the particular reader.

It requires no audacity to call the recent decades "the age of interpretation." Umberto Eco gives us an interpretive mold that responds to the absence of a direct relationship between the text and the author. He says:

> In the course of such a complex interaction between my knowledge and the knowledge I impute to the unknown author, I am not speculating about the author's intentions but about the text's intention, or about the intention of that Model Author that I am able to recognize in terms of textual strategy. (69)

In other words, the reader assumes the decisive power over the text, even though the interpretation is still constrained by the "textual strategy." Stanley Fish goes even further in this direction. In Eco's argument, since the text sustain no meaning in itself, but some strategy which affects the reader's reading, it mainly serves as a midway station. Based on this same logic, Stanley Fish argues, "there is no such thing as literal meaning, if by literal meaning one means a meaning that is perspicuous no matter what the context and no matter what is in the speaker's or hearer's mind" (Doing What Comes Naturally 4). Since the text's connection to the author is not as reliable as one used to presume, the power of producing the meaning naturally falls into the interpreter's hand. In Fish's theory, what is important is what he calls "interpretive communities." Interpretive communities are institutions in which readers from the same group share the similar interpretive strategies.

An interpretive community regulates the power of interpretation by setting limits on the mental operations a reader can perform (Is There a Text 331). Both Eco and Fish's theories ignore the existence of the narrator and give the reader the decisive interpretive power. Now, let's first examine the notions of textual strategy and interpretive communities respectively, in order to clarify the relationship between the narrator and the reader.

Eco's postulate I have just quoted is recent (1990, in his Tanner lectures at Clare Hall, Cambridge). In it he raises the notion of the intention of the text in order to seek a middle ground between the intention of the author and the intention of the interpreter (25). The intention of the text incorporates itself into the textual strategy to produce a "model reader" in order to grasp the "Model Author" (66, 69). If the empirical author is the author of the text, then the Model Author is the author of the text's meaning. Now the questions are, what exactly is the textual strategy and why Eco needs a model reader and a model author to act as a midwife that delivers the text's meaning.

Eco points out that textual strategy is a linguistic object. It functions through unconscious mechanisms which he calls "serendipity" (85). Therefore, it is basically a semantic strategy but with an emphasis on its social and cultural implications. Eco maintains that, as a complex strategy of interactions, it demands readers' competence in language as a social treasury. By social treasury, he means "not only a given language as set of grammatical rules, but also the whole encyclopedia that the performances of that language have implemented, namely, the cultural conventions that language has produced and the very history of the previous interpretations of many texts, comprehending the text that the reader is in the course of reading" (67-68).

Obviously, the model reader is conceptually a reader who assumes full competence over the language of the text; and the model author is conceptually a product conceived by the model reader in the light of his or her cultural norms.

Although Eco now is eager to stress the cultural convention in order to introduce the tacit agreement between the author and the reader and to tone down the reader's understanding of linguistic meaning, theoretically by raising the concept of the text's intention he does not reduce the arbitrariness of the reader's interpretation to any extent. For with or without theoretical explication, readers always read a text within the context of their cultural conventions. There is no constraining power from the text's side. At the bottom line, what the text stands for in the reader's mind is still the interplay of language. Since the empirical author has already faded into background, how to arrange this interplay is left entirely to the reader. There is obviously a paradox in the logic of this line of reasoning. On the one hand, the person who has the power to affect the reader's apprehension of language is supposedly the model author; on the other hand, the model author should be the result of the model reader's comprehension of language. In other words, the model author should be the one who is intrinsically aligned with the text, but instead turns out to be a creation of the model reader who is outside the text. The notion of the text's intention can hardly gain ground with this logical paradox.

Arguing with Eco, Richard Rorty tries to avoid this paradox by going to one extreme. He grabs the notion that text is a linguistic product and hence advocates his own pragmatic viewpoint. Rorty claims that in a text sentences are connected by "various labyrinthine inferential relationships." Logically,

one can only check a sentence against other sentences but not against an object. Therefore, the text of an encyclopedia has nothing to do with the referred objects so far as we are talking about its internal or external coherence (100). Rorty asserts, "the coherence of the text is not something it has before it is described, any more than the dots had coherence before we connected them" (97). The textual mechanism is merely a fiction of structuralism. For pragmatic purposes a reader may interpret a text in any way he or she wants. In Rorty's words, "reading texts is a matter of reading them in the light of other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information, or what have you, and then seeing what happens" (105). He advocates using but not interpreting a text. Rorty believes that the pragmatist is entitled to use the text arbitrarily, because textually language merely consists in unorganized "marks" (98). Seeing texts merely as linguistic objects is the rationale of Rorty's theory. In his theory, there is no other bond among these "dots" but their linguistic relationships. Only the reader has the power to connect individual words, phrases, sentences and discourses on a level higher than their semantic connotations.

What puts Eco's notion of the text's intention into its predicament is the lack of a centripetal force by which a text can hold itself together as a whole. In his scheme, the reader is in a direct relation to the text's language on its linguistic level. In other words, the reader is experiencing the text sentence by sentence, without conceiving the center that subordinates all sentences as parts of the whole. If we free ourselves from the linguistic viewpoint, we can see that when the reader encounters these sentences, these sentences have already been sematically connected within the textual frame. The composition

of a narrative proffers a text's potential meaning. This meaning goes beyond what semantics can say about the linguistic elements involved. What sustains the linguistic elements in a unit and brings them to a level above sematic explanation is the existence of the narrator.

The reader's participation is necessary for the explication of the meaning of a text. One thing the reader brings into play in making meaning is the consciousness of genre. Starting to read a novel, a reader either knows that this is a novel, or is reminded by the text itself that it is a novel. Given the knowledge of what a novel is, the reader is tempted to attribute every sentence to a posited narrator. Around the axis of the narrator, these sentences are organized into the unit of "story". The existence of the story demands that the reader connect each sentence to other sentences in the frame of the story. The narrator's vantage point influences the way in which the reader deciphers the linguistic meaning of the sentences. In this paradigm, the more the reader reads, the clearer the narrator becomes; the clearer the narrator is, the more coherent a story gets to be; the more coherent the story is, the closer the reader goes to the projected vantage point. From this vantage point, the reader may understand the linguistic units in a way other than gained by reading them without the frame of story. In a narrative text, the linguistic elements are not "dots" but are internally connected. What connects them within the text is not the textual strategy but the narrator.

The narrator is a necessity for making the narrative genre. To neglect the existence of the narrator would certainly jeopardize the effort to establish a coherent theory of narrative. Roland Barthes's S/Z is an example of this. Barthes maintains in this work that, due to the endless line of readers who inevitably encounter the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks and

the infinity of languages, a text must intrinsically bear its plurality in reaching its totality (5-6). Barthes is very convincing on this count. As he has shown through his analysis of the particular text, Balzac's Sarrasine, the realization that the elementary units of language have interimplications indeed subverts the closure of the reader's understanding of the culture by the references to different types of knowledge entailed by the very same language (20). However, there is a negation of the generic constraint a literary text must bear when Barthes carries out his writing-degree-zero postulate. Barthes claims that a text is "a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds" (5). Put yet another way, these signifiers are not the words whose meanings are defined by a dictionary. As Barbara Johnson points out, "Barthes lays out a theory of literature based on a split between the classic notion of a *work* (*oeuvre*)--considered as a closed, finished, reliable representational *object*--and the modern notion of a *text*--considered as an open, infinite *process* that is both meaning-generating and meaning-subverting" (40). However, as Barthes shows in his own analysis, it is impossible to interpret a text without considering its generic identity. There is no way to ignore the existence of the narrator in analyzing a text that is a narrative. A text might be a process in which the interplay of signifiers can be reconstructed in different ways according to different reading schemes. This is a theoretical assumption based on the linguistic approach initiated by Saussure. However, there are certain generic constraints each text bears that are beyond the scope of linguistic analysis. In a narrative, as Barthes suggests, the narration does not turn the signifier into the signified and is not a structure, grammar or a logic (6). It is a movement, or, as Barthes observes, a gradual order of the narrative sequence

(30). However, what regulates the narrative movement is not, as Barthes insists, merely the external "reading eye" (Ibid.). In reading a text, when readers conceive the signifiers and turn them into the signifieds, they also conceive the way in which the narrator has translated the signifiers into signifieds. If, as Barthes stresses, a word always has its multiple meanings, in reading a narrative, the reader's choice of a particular meaning of the word is attuned to and attested by the narrator's understanding. For Barthes, it is the listener's ear that brings the tonal unity to the melody of music; likewise it is the reader's interpretation that brings the semantic, cultural and symbolic codes into play (Ibid.). Taking its generic characteristics into consideration, we may add that in reading a narrative, the narrator is the one who performs the role of the conductor. The narrator mediates between linguistic units as the signifiers and the reader who turns the signifiers into the signifieds. As a matter of fact, in S/Z, Barthes often focuses on the narrator's strategic arrangements, and extracts certain connotations of some verbal expressions by exposing their linkages to the relevant verbal expressions. In the relationship to both the author and the reader, to a certain extent it is the narrator who endows the text of a narrative with the power to gain its autonomy.

In this regard, let us move to Fish's notion of the interpretive communities in order to see how narrative can maintain its autonomy. Fish stretches reader-response theory to its logical limit. Earlier he devoted the book-length study Surprised by Sin to elucidating how the writer employs textual arrangements to stimulate the reader's imagination and actualize the authorial intention; this stimulation is part of how the reader responds to the text. Later he renames his theory "reader-oriented analyses" instead of

"reader-response criticism" (Is There a Text 12). After "Interpreting the Variorum" in 1973, in his theory the text no longer is an independent object that to which the reader will have a certain kind of response: "the text and the reader fall together" (Ibid.). The text then is the product of the reader's interpretation (16), but is not the physical data waiting for the reader's interpretation (334). A new way of reading creates a new text (180). There is no such thing like the text that directs the reader's perception and understanding. It is the reader who adapts certain interpretive strategies and organizes the whole reading experience. The interpretive communities provide the interpretive strategies for a given reader.

Fish's theory, as Eco's, postulates a competent reader as necessary for generating a text's meaning. Since Fish believes that textual coherence both begins and ends in interpretation, he puts more effort on elaborating the concept of the reader. Eco calls his reader the "model reader"; Fish, on different occasions, names his reader using different terms, such as "ideal or idealized reader," "informed reader" (Is There a Text 48), "optimal reader," "intended reader" (160), or "at-home reader" (161). By these names he indicates that the reader needed for his theory should have acquired enough linguistic and literary competence to share certain assumptions and procedures in a certain interpretive community. In the reading process, the reader is supposed to have complete mastery over language, possess certain interpretive codes, strategies and routines, and be equipped with adequate knowledge of the background and previous hermeneutic interpretations about the text in question. Besides personal dispositions, a reader must occupy a certain position in society and work in a particular cultural setting. Moreover,

readers are always endowed with certain interests and goals when choosing and interpreting their particular texts.

For Fish, a literary work provides a condition for the reader to integrate the above-mentioned potentialities into reality. He maintains that readers themselves are products of the constructing process. The act of reading not only produces the text, but also constitutes the reader. Both the text and reader fall under the larger category of interpretation (Is There a Text 17); "the reader's experience is itself the product of a set of interpretive assumptions" (147). Related to a literary work, the reader is situated at the axis of several sets of referentials. Each set of these referentials, on its own terms, can be explained by its own principles, such as political, sociological, anthropological, psychological or linguistic principles. However, in a particular process of reading, these referentials form an interdependent pattern that counters the unilinear reasoning based on the principle of one single non-literary discipline. As a whole this organized entity has its own characteristics. The sameness or similarity of these characteristics renders assistance in dividing readers into distinguishable groups. These groups are what Fish calls the interpretive communities.

In Fish's view, most methods applied to literary study so far are transplanted from non-literary disciplines. They operate at the abstract level (Is There a Text 30). Therefore, he remarks, "what is required, then, is a method" (32). When we talk about the reader, we should always keep in mind that the reader should be the one who is actually reading a text at a particular time. Out of this context, there is no reader we should discuss. A reader is always in a temporal dimension. Fish insists, "everything depends on the temporal dimension" (159); and "a critic must learn to read in a way that

multiplies crises, and must never give a remedy in the sense of a single and unequivocal answer to the question" (Doing What Comes Naturally 137, the author's italics). Reading is a multidimensional process. The reader is the center of this process. In Fish's words, the informed reader is the "control" (Is There a Text 49). For reading itself is a succession of acts performed by the reader in choosing more valid assumptions, in order to interpret the text.

In Fish's theory, the concept of interpretive communities falls under the category of institution. Fish maintains that the institutions in which we are already embedded set limits on the mental operations we are performing (Is There a Text 331). Readers are not free agents. Potentially they have the ability to interpret, for interpretation is constitutive of being human. But, how to interpret is a skill one has to learn in a given circumstance (172). The way one interprets makes things different (28), and an interpretive method is rooted in an interpretive community. For "the self does not exist apart from the communal or conventional categories of thought that enable its operations (of thinking, seeing, reading)" (335). Fish calls a reading group a "interpretive" community because a interpretive community is not simply a social, cultural, moral, linguistic or literary group. It is actually an interpretive matrix; an assemblage of the codes shared by the readers in the same group; a pattern of combining these interpretive codes; an institutional situation constituted by a set of already-in-place concerns; a viewpoint or way of organizing experience; a system of intelligibility; or, in Fish's words, an "institutional nesting" (308). The grouping of interpretive communities depends on the reading of a particular literary work. Members of a community have their tacit agreement on reading and understanding

particular text. They most likely will reorganize themselves into different groups when turning to another work. A person stays in a community only temporarily. Whenever a reader has improved his or her skill and situation, he or she automatically transfers to a different interpretive community.

Fish's theory also contains an internal paradox. On the one hand, as we have seen, the notion of interpretive communities is the bedrock of his theory. And an interpretive community is an "institutional nesting" built on the interpretations of a particular text. In other words, the text must have its inner gravity pulling the interpretive strings. On the other hand, the starting point of Fish's theory denies the existence of text. To Fish, the object of interpretation is the reader's biased version of the text but not the text itself. This version is biased by the reader's personal interests and goals. Without the perception or interpretation issued by the reader, there is no way to recognize and verify any intention in the text. In the epistemological perspective, of Fish's model, there is no neutral mechanism of adjudication between language as the stimuli and the recognition of the represented things as the response (Doing What Comes Naturally 16), and it is impossible to have an objective observer who could reflect the world without the adjustment or distortion of his or her perception, as the perception is inevitably biased by his or her interests. Therefore, there is no universal version of any thing in the world which could be accepted by everyone. Fish insists that "mediated access to the world is the only access we ever have" (80). Thus, what we normally consider a text is only inert brute facts. The texts Fish indulges are the texts "that emerge as the consequence of our interpretive activities" (Is There a Text 13). Each reader has his or her own text of the same brute work; "the text has become an extension of the interpretive disagreement that divides them"

(340). If this is the case, then the question becomes, how do the readers in the same interpretive community come to the same brute text in the first place?

What leads Fish's argument into its self-contradiction is his use of the differences among the readers' perceptions of the same text as the reason to deny the integrality of the text. If we accept Fish's claim that before a literary text becomes the object of aesthetic appreciation, it has already been the product of the interpretive act, then we have to admit that although the interpreter's bias does affect the perception of the text, as far as the text has its inner connection to connect the "brute facts," the text still assumes a great power to regulate the reader's attention. If the value of a text is essentially created by interpretive strategies, we need neither Cervantes nor James Joyce but only some masters of the craft of interpretive strategy. In my opinion, the reason that Fish puts so little weight on the integrality of the text, is because of the influence of the linguistic approach still prevailing in the contemporary literary criticism. For one thing, in Fish's theory, like Eco's, in the case of narrative there is also a negation of the existence of the narrator who controls the organization of linguistic elements and thereby should be considered an indispensable medium between the "brute facts" and interpretation. However, Fish's notion of interpretive communities may enrich our understanding of the narrator, if we acknowledge that the narrator maintains the integrality of a narrative text and that a text is a center around which readers organize their interpretive experiences. There are at least two points to be made here.

First, Fish's argument helps us realize that the perception of a narrator is not fixed. In Fish's model, what characterizes the text is the reader's attitude rather than the elements within the text. A text thus falls within the specific

contemporary context in which the reader is living rather than the historical context in which the author was writing. This implies that instead of the normative system in the author's time incorporated in the text, we ought to shift our emphasis onto the contemporary intelligibility embodied in the reader's understanding of the text. To a certain extent, as we have seen, readers' biased perceptions indeed modify their conceptions of the text, including that of the narrator in a narrative text. On a historical scale, over generations the differences among readers' perceptions result in an evolution of the reading consciousness. Since the formation of the narrator comprises the reader's perception in reading the narrative, the narrator actually grows up through the generations. Even in the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself, where the narrator is identified with the author--because of the advances we have made in the consciousness of humanity and of the race problem, the growing sympathy with the human suffering, the deepened understanding of the struggle against injustice, the increased distance from the historical situation, and the acquired knowledge about the genre of autobiography (such as the recently-explicated double presence of the self acting in the past and of the self writing in the present), and the questionable truthfulness in choosing a particular angle to select materials and make stories, etc., because of the joint effect implemented by these factors on the reading consciousness--the Douglass in the Narrative we now conceive deviates significantly from the Douglass conceived by his contemporaries. Nevertheless, modifications can only function as modifications. Douglass is still Douglass. The narrator within the text still assumes a formative power. No one would misconceive him as a slave-holder

or as a hypocritical politician.

The second lesson we may learn from Fish's notion of interpretive communities is to see a literary text itself as an institution that bears multiple layers of interpretations, and the narrator as this institution's host. In Fish's model, the reader is an amalgamation of the relevant knowledge existing at the the time when contacting a particular text. The competence of the interpretation lies in the integrality of this amalgamation. This competence cannot maintain its vitality if it is analyzed in such non-literary way by a philosophical, political, psychological or sociological approach. The accumulation of this type of knowledge is a particular portion of human intelligibility, and the text is the root and magnet in generating and sustaining this type of knowledge. Therefore, no matter how reluctant Fish might be in pursuing his argument in this direction, conceptually the text is the only way to carry out the institutional function of connecting the relevant interpretive consciousness and stratifying this particular type of knowledge through its received interpretations.

In the case of a narrative, new readers negotiate their attitudes to and understandings of the narrated events through their new readings of the story. The narrator possesses the formulative power of the story. When readers start to read a story, at every step when they gather data from the linguistic units in order to anticipate the development of the story, they mentally talk with the narrator about the plot of the story and the fate of the characters. They may silently argue with the narrator, wishing that the story could be told in other ways, but they cannot impose their intentions upon the reading of the text to the degree that the narrator loses control of the story. Readers reach an agreement with the narrator in their own interpretations of

the story. New readers coming to the scene all follow the same procedure. However, at the end of the reading, beside the tension between the narrator's intention and the reader's intention, based on the discrepancy of interpretations, the new readers also find that they are in conflict with the readers who came before them. The discrepancy between interpretations marks an evolution in the reading consciousness of this particular story. If one tries to isolate the reader or the interpretive strategy from the narrative, the coherence of the procedure is ruined. The metamorphosis of the reading consciousness always attaches to the narrator who is the center of the narrative text; and the narrative text is framed by the existence of the narrator. In other words, if we see the interpretive act as a performance of human intelligibility, and the negotiation of different interpretive acts as a communicative network, then in the case of narrative, we may say that the narrators of various narratives function as the knots in this network.

The relationship of a narrative to its author and reader show the double-faceted nature of the narrative. On the one hand, a narrative is relatively autonomous. Neither the author nor the reader is capable of manipulating it to the extent that the narrator loses the control of the story. On the other hand, a narrative is a piece in the world of texts, which link it to some deep human interests. Textual closure is not the end of the contained narrative movement. In many narrative masterpieces, such as James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Cao Xueqin's Dream of the Red Chamber, the story's ending is not the solution to the problems manifested by the narration. A textual enclosure provides a pattern in which the movements of actions and consciousnesses interact in a certain way. This pattern

embodies the author's intention and gives the reader a starting-point to orient his or her imagination in reading the story. The narrator is the one who sustains the conflicts of human interests and various consciousnesses by telling the story. The narrative that contains these conflicts is not merely the representation of the social context at the time in which it was written. Given these embodied conflicts, the narrative itself is a constituent link which engages these conflicts in a rather complicated way. The narrator's perspective is the internal structure that brings the conflicts of interests and consciousnesses into being. This perspective offers us an insight into the situation, as well as a foundation on which each reader can add a new layer in order to construct the last monument of humanity.

The Narrator's Perspective and the Structure of Narrative: Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady

The narrator's perspective gives a narrative its internal structure. It allows the reader a full imaginative stretch in tracing the plot of the story and the development of the characters' personalities. A narrator is a novelist's artistic design. However, in a narrative, the narrator's perspective functions as the framework. It gives the reader a certain insight when absorbing the story. It also provides characters with a space in which they may maintain their own viewpoints even in the face of the author's reluctance to accept these perspectives. In this section I will use Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady (hereafter The Portrait for short) to discuss how the narrator's perspective functions as the internal frame of a narrative.

The narrator's perspective is essential to the application of the

narrative strategy named the "point of view". The point of view is a central interest for Henry James both in his fictions and in his theory of fiction. An early anonymous review of The Portrait observes that this novel employs an "analytical method." This method allows a dialogue which "is only meant to afford the personages an opportunity to develop each other's character" (3: 120). As Joseph Warren Beach also points out, James always tries to avoid employing an omniscient author and a first-person narrator. This is his "slovenly way of telling a story" (56-57). In other words, James restrains himself from directly giving the reader information, and yet he also escapes the restriction of just one character's experience. The author can tell the story from the viewpoints of different characters, and constantly shift the spotlight (57-58). Although James sometimes relies on an "imaginary spectator" to assume a highly objective tone, the happiest way of his telling story consistently is, Beach tells us, "one which admits our following more closely the thoughts and feelings of his characters" (60-61). This remark is significant. However, there a question remains: is the "imaginary spectator" the narrator?

The narrator is an essential concept for understanding how a narrative made. To acknowledge the existence of the narrator is to acknowledge a special way of interpretation. For as we know, the narrator is the one who connects the author to the characters as well as the reader to the author. Readers see things through different characters' eyes, but the arrangement of these different viewpoints is accomplished by the narrator. The characters may rebel at the roles the narrator assigns to them, but the conflicts can only happen within the overall structure cast by the narrator's perspective. Even

if The Portrait is "a novel which describes a fall from innocence" (Chase 154), and is intended to profile "the evil embrace of Gibert Osmond" (Powers 84), or even if it should be seen as Isabel's self-justification, especially to justify that "a woman can give up being a girl to become a lady without giving up being herself" (Weisenfarth 18), it is apparent that we conceive the thematic idea through but not merely through one person's view such as that of Osmond or Isabel, that reflects the thoughts and feelings of this one particular character.

Narrative is an orchestration in which the narrator is not only a performer but also the conductor. Mary Cross feels that whether or not there is an narrator in The Portrait is not important. She argues, "James frames The Portrait in a cross-referencing gleaned from the connotations of words that his style and sentence patterns exert their best efforts to elicit" (47-48). This may be the case, but I see it differently. In this section, I intend to present a close reading of the novel, and try to outline the narrator's perspective and the interplay between the narrator's viewpoint and the characters' viewpoints. In doing so, I hope I can prove that the narrator's perspective gives the narrative its internal structure. Whenever possible, I'll try to show how the surface of the internal structure may help us to explain some puzzling questions we have often encountered in reading the novel, such as why Isabel decided to marry Osmond instead of Goodwood or Warburton, why she suffered willingly after she had married, why she finally disobeyed Osmond's wishes and went to England to see Ralph, and why in the end she still went back to Rome.

The need for narrativization, as Catherine Riessman observes in her case study, often arises from the attempt to grapple with a predicament, such as a breach between ideal and real, self and society (3). To assume the role of a

narrator in the form of a narrative enables one to translate one's own personal experience into an object of contemplation. Also, in transforming one's personal experience into the narrator's story, one may extend one's own personal experience into a wider range of human interest and reach a different level of profundity. In the case of The Portrait, we know that one of James's intentions at the time when he wrote the novel was to create a female Christopher Newman, that he had personal attachments to the living persons upon whom he had probably relied while creating his characters, that he was deeply concerned about the conflicts between the American values and the European tradition, and that just as he was writing the novel, he was frustrated by the separation from his brother and annoyed by the attacks on his newly-published book Hawthorne. However, the novel's significance goes far beyond the author's personal interests.

In creating a novel, the author yields control of the story to the narrator. While reading The Portrait one may feel that as if James is siting among his readers, expecting them to experience the same feelings he himself is having in contemplating the portrait. A novel both is and is not a personal statement. The author expects the novel to evoke certain emotions and thoughts, but cannot simply replace the narrator and urge the reader to have the emotions and thoughts he or she expects. Authors are the creators of narrators, but they need to create them with subtlety. It is the narrator who casts a perspective over the narration and allows full play to the viewpoints of the different characters. In The Portrait, it is only through the narrator that James is able to convey a universal concern: the doomed struggle with one's own fate. This concern presents itself to the reader as the narrator's

perspective from which the story is told.

There are at least two questions which go into the making of the narrator's perspective. One is the identity of the narrator; the other is the way in which the narrator's perspective is presented.

The identity of the narrator, according to Wallace Martin's Recent Theories of Narrative, has been a source of controversy for more than twenty years in regard to the issue of the point of view (134). One thing that has caused confusion is the usage of the linguistic indicator "I." As Martin points out, among the categories related to the point of view, such as the author, the implied author, the authorial narration, the third-person narration and the first-person narration, what marks the demarcation is largely the consideration of whether or not the word "I" appears within the text (135). This standard itself, it seems to me, is rather confusing. The word "I" in a narrative does not necessarily refer to the author. Since we are mostly talking about fiction, "I," more often than not, indicates a fictional creation rather than an actual human being. Just as the narrated characters, in a narration the narrator is also a product of the author's imagination. If narrators have their own identities, they certainly have the right to use "I." There is no reason to attribute every "I" to the author. In some novels,[43] the authors purposely introduce their personal lives into the texts to remind readers that whatever "I" have said stands for the authorial voice. However, this is an exception that doesn't prove the rule. Looking at The Portrait, it wouldn't be difficult to find that the narratorial connection of "I" to the narrated events is much stronger than its linguistic bond to the author, James.

[43] Such as Ken Kessey's Sometimes a Great Notion. For instance, he purposefully introduces his father's Navy experience (in Chapter Eight) as a way to indicate that there is a bond between the author himself and the "I."

The Portrait, as the title indicates, is meant to be a portrait. However, it is a portrait that contains its painter. Both the narration and the narrator are the author's creation. The "I" in the text is the painter-narrator. There is hardly a clue suggesting that this "I" is James himself.[44] The way the narrator sees things is not necessarily the way James does. There are about fifty instances of the I-narrator occurring in the whole text. The verbs that describe the narrator's acts give the impression that he is trying to sketch the portrait in as objective a way as he can. "I" always "say" (123), "attempt to sketch" (17), "quote" (183), "speak of" (describe as, 109), "count over" (164), "picture" (177), "repeat" (94, 240), "mention" (266) and "narrate" (419). If the I-narrator is making some speculation, he often explains that "I have already had the reason to say" (378). He intends to "maintain the phrase in the face of fact" (123). The narrator also assumes the pronoun "we" (which occurs about thirty times) in order to emphasize that he himself is on the reader's side. He reminds the reader of what "we" have already touched upon, learned or seen (73, 95, 177). He speaks for the reader, saying that "we" know more about the characters than they do themselves (280). The narrator suggests that "we" should make a guess based on what "we" have already learned (215, 413), and

[44] Actually, James puts his own words in the mouth of Ralph instead of that of the I-narrator. For instance, in his notebook James states, "The idea of the whole thing is that the poor girl, who has dreamed of freedom and nobleness, who has done, as she believes, a generous, natural, clear-sighted thing, finds herself in reality ground in the very mill of the conventional" (15). In The Portrait, on his deathbed, Ralph directly express as this authorial notion, partly repeating it word by word: "You wanted to look at life for yourself--but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. You were ground in the very mill of the conventions" (470).

that "we" need to pay attention to the episodes "we must remember" (320). It is interesting to notice that in those descriptions of the scenes in which Gibert Osmond and Madame Merle are planning the intrigue to trap Isabel as the victim (Chap. 22-26), the narrator seems to make a strenuous effort not to be left alone and employs the plural "we" constantly, as if he also wants the reader to be a witness in watching this unbelievable treachery and these crucial moments in the development of the plot. The narrator himself explains why there should be a first-person observer standing outside of the portraits. He says, "I can only give it to you as I see it" (260). However, in order to see we need two things: a focalized entity capable of absorbing insights coming from different angles, and a peculiar way or ability that both grants and limits the entry of these insights, much as light is mediated through refraction. In other words, a narrator is the observer and the narrator's perspective is the way things are observed.

We should not expect the narrator's perspective to be stated conspicuously. In a sense, the narrator's perspective is the peculiar way in which the various characters' viewpoints are fabricated into a unity as the story unfolds. In The Portrait, the narrator sometimes indeed tries not to be unobstrusive and overtly states his own opinion. However, by and large, these overtly-expressed opinions function mainly as referentials, mapping out an individual viewpoint in which the characters' viewpoints are narrated. Therefore, the narrator is telling us that his own eyes are also biased.

One striking impression one may get from the opening scene of The Portrait is the ambivalence of the narrator's attitude toward the "peculiarly English picture" he is sketching. This was "an admirable setting to an innocent pastime," a scene of fine taste and rare quality built on old money

and cherished by a civilization with a long history. However, this setting reflected a splendor of afternoon in which the vigor of the old tradition had already "waned." The seeming eternity of pleasure now expresses itself merely in the "sense of leisure." The persons who take pleasure from things of the "finest and rarest quality" become only so "indifferent." The symbol of this perfect scene is the house that, as we learn, is a refined establishment imprisoning the lives of both the old and the young Touchetts (17). This is the setting in which the drama starts. The narrator's attitude in describing the setting acts as the central viewpoint that sees the story unfolding. Whether or not this is James's own attitude is not the issue here. What concerns us here is how the narrator's attitude affects the narration.

The Portrait has been widely called a psychological novel. However, there is only a very small portion in the novel that presents direct descriptions of characters' mental activities, such as subjective feelings and private thoughts. Most of these mental activities described are Isabel's, a few are Ralph's, and one or two describe Osmond and Rosier respectively. Beyond this, almost all the psychological activities we have conceived are indirect observations, observed by the narrator as well as by other characters. Each character's image is projected at center of the overlapped impressions given by the other characters. Each character's account of the other characters is tinted by the narrator's panoramic view in telling the story, and contrasts with the narrator's own accounts of these same characters.

Isabel Archer is certainly the central figure in The Portrait. As James tells us in the Preface, she is the "gem" of the whole narrative project (4). Isabel is an innocent, beautiful, intelligent and charming girl who longs for

her independence. Morally, readers want Isabel's fate to be valued higher than the novel seems to value it. However, if we try to find where our impressions of her innocence and her desire for freedom come from, it is interesting to notice that under the same names of innocence and freedom, different characters in the novel imply different things when they talk about Isabel. And these implications are apt to pass unnoticed. In addition to this, there is still a discrepancy between characters' comments and the narrator's own opinions. For instance, almost everyone in the story gives us the impression that Isabel is a beautiful girl. By contrast, the narrator stresses her intelligence. In introducing Isabel, he particularly points out that Isabel is not as pretty as her sister Edith. In general, she surpasses her sisters by being intellectually superior (37). She is beautiful, but the impression of beauty other characters conceive of her is misleading in the sense that this impression conceals her inner strength. Osmond is attracted to Isabel's innocence and beauty and thus drags her into a marriage that turns out to be a tragedy for both of them. One of the seeds of this tragedy is his ignorance of Isabel's intelligence and her strong wish for freedom. There is a conflict of the viewpoints by which different persons see the same thing through different experiences. There is also a difference between the narrator as an outside observer and the characters as personally-involved actors. This conflict and difference lay the groundwork for the dramatization of the narrative. Now, let us examine Isabel's innocence and her longing for freedom more closely, in order to elucidate this point a little further.

Isabel's innocence is mainly exhibited by her falling victim to Madame Merle and Osmond's fortune-hunting scheme. The narrator lays open the intrigue to the reader even before Isabel has a chance to know Osmond.

Ironically, almost everyone knows she is the prey for the trap set up by Madame Merle and Osmond. It is only Isabel who sees this matter differently. In the other characters' eyes, she is trapped because she is innocent. It is true that at this time the magic of money has not yet polluted her soul. When Ms. Touchett finds Isabel in Albany, the narrator dwells particularly on her ignorance of her financial situation. Isabel tells her aunt, "I am not stupid; but I don't know anything about money" (35). This description certainly affirms the reader's conviction of her innocence. However, this is only one side of the irony that evokes a deeper understanding of the affair. At the time when Isabel makes up her mind to accept Osmond's proposal, she is fully aware of the possibility that she is a potential target for fortune-hunter. The narrator grants her a period of several months that was "an interval sufficiently replete with incident" (264). Whether or not Isabel's decision is pathetically wrong, the decision itself is not a decision of *le coup de foudre.* She has plenty of time to think about this marriage. The Countess Gemini explicitly tells Isabel that she has something to reveal about the evil side of Osmond's personality. In addition, Isabel herself has already heard almost all these possibilities from different persons like Ralph and Mrs. Touchett, including the possibility that Osmond is after her money. However, she still believes that she could not be an easy victim. Isabel's viewpoint forms another axis of the story as established by the narrator, and it is not merely a point at which one may easily feel sympathy for a deceived girl. To a greater extent this axis is a point where one may clearly conceive the failure of a soul that struggled to elude societal impositions but could find no safe place to which to escape.

Characterization is a major narrative art. In the process of characterization, the characters form their own opinions of themselves. These opinions do not necessarily coincide with the opinions the author intends the reader to have. In The Portrait, as James states in his Notebooks, the author's idea is to show that Isabel wouldn't be able to escape the mill of convention (15). However, Isabel has a different idea of her own fate. She never believes that she will be a victim of convention. In her mind, falling in love with an English lord is conventional, and she did not intend to step into society in the conventional way. Isabel feels that marrying Warburton would be a betrayal to her "fate" (117). In contrast, although Osmond declares that he is "the convention itself' (259), for Isabel, the act of marrying Osmond itself is a challenge to convention. Ralph sees Osmond as "a sterile dilettante" (286), a hollow shell of the stratified tradition. Isabel confesses that Osmond is "a prefect nonentity" (273), in other words, a shell that might offer a shape to her ambition. Isabel never has a clear idea of her fate; for her it is something waiting to be fulfilled in the future. She is endowed with a strong imagination and curious about the unknown world that had a "fertilizing quality" (31). She believes that "at bottom she had a different morality" (269). This belief encourages her to cross the border at which other people's opinions should be observed, and makes her almost be glad to suffer the pain of exclusion while enjoying the elation of liberty. Although both Warburton and Osmond embody the finest European qualities, Isabel prefers Osmond to Warburton because Warburton is a specimen of the individuals who "belonged to types already present to her mind" (220), whereas Osmond gives her "a very private thrill, the consciousness of a new relation" (218). She realizes that her pursuit for this thus-conceived fate will inevitably bring her unhappiness, and she thus

anticipates, "I can't escape unhappiness" (118). In Ralph's eyes, when she makes the decision about her marriage, Isabel is soaring and sailing spiritually (285). The fact that she has turned down two suitors brings her "a sort of inward triumph" (243). Ralph's money ruinously gives her the illusion that it will be easy to succeed in pursuing her career. There is no limitation for her imagination, and her imagination is again flattered by Osmond's pretended modesty. Instead of her ignorant innocence, it is through her idiosyncratic way of thinking that she "invented a fine theory about Gibert Osmond" (288). She genuinely believes that the difference between her opinion and that of the others is a difference of morality.

The narrator's narration certainly informs us that Isabel is falling victim to Madame Merle and Osmond. As mentioned above, at the beginning of the story the narrator shows his ambivalent feeling to the European tradition. Madame Merle and Osmond represent the dark side of this tradition: the lack of vigor. The old tradition builds its splendor on a crude foundation; the thirst for money is at the base of this foundation. From Ralph's viewpoint, because of her self-inflated mood, Isabel is actually deceived by the person who hides his drive for money under the delicacy of taste. In Isabel's own view, instead of being victimized, she reaches her maturity when she becomes engaged to Osmond. She tell Ralph, "one must choose a corner and cultivate that" (283). Was Ralph able to offer a better option? From what the narrator has so far given us to consider (remember that Isabel has already received proposals from an honest young American who is rich, and a grand English lord who has a gentle heart and is quite liberal in his thinking, besides Ralph himself), there is no better alternative, not only to her standard but also to Ralph's

(though maybe not to some readers'). In the symphony of other people's voices conducted by the narrator, Isabel's voice creates a twist, but is prone to losing its impact on the reader's mind, amid these other viewpoints and alternatives.

After Isabel's marriage, the tension among the viewpoints of the narrator, Isabel and other characters does not ease off but heads in a different direction. In the later part of the narration (starting from Chapter 36), the narrator starts to see things through Isabel's eyes.[45] Isabel observed before the marriage that if this was a game, in this game Osmond's risk was as great as her own (284). Isabel is not the only victim in the marriage. The intrigue backfires. Osmond and Madame Merle are both victims too, and they suffer even more than Isabel does. Isabel still controls her money. She is still loved by those persons she likes. She is able to walk out of the marriage if she chooses to do so. At first the narrator tries to insist on his previous opinion, telling us that "by this time Isabel's needs and inclinations had considerably changed" (331); then he has to admit that "her poor winged spirit had always had a great desire to do its best, and it had not as yet been seriously discouraged" (333). Both Ralph and Warburton try to find the changes expected in Isabel and declare that they have found them, but then virtually confess to Isabel that they had been wrong and found no significant change in her. Rosier gives us his impression directly: "the years had touched her only to enrich her; the flower of her youth had not faded, it only hung more quietly on its stem" (303). Isabel is caged. Osmond's deliberate insults are almost

[45] The switch of viewpoint also reflects itself in the subtle change in the way the author uses language, for instance, the usage of certain terms such as the word "fine" which idiosyncratically is Isabel's favorite term.

tangible whenever their conflicts surface, and always make Isabel renounce her claims. However, Isabel does not abandon her principle of independence. It never occurs to her to change her attitude to life in order to accommodate to Osmond's wishes. She is no longer interested in the world around her as a spectacle, but in the inner experience in which she herself is deeply involved (462). If innocence is an integrity that is personally cherished, then Isabel has not lost it in her marriage, as Madame Merle and Osmond anticipate when they plan the scheme. On the other side, Osmond confesses to Madame Merle that he is suffering intolerably in his life with Isabel (426). Madame Merle also suffer, as she has lost her daughter, as well as the right to live in Europe, which to her is as necessary as water is to fish. The narrator gradually realizes that Madame Merle may have made Gilbert Osmond's marriage, but she certainly has not made Isabel Archer's (332). However, at this point, the narrator can not yet decipher the enigma of Isabel's mind. Therefore, he assigns a considerable length of text to Isabel herself, letting her explain why she decided to marry Osmond and why she willingly stays and suffers this marriage.

Isabel's voice grows stronger in the latter part of the narrative. It seems that she is arguing with the reader, who has so far misinterpreted the course of her career. At this stage of the story, she now realizes that she miscalculated the balance of the power between her free will and the sinister desire to absorb her into the orbit of another moral system. She is the victim of her own notion of innocence. However, for Isabel herself, this innocence is not her ignorance of Osmond's wish for money, as we perceive from the narrator and other characters' observations, but the blind belief in the romantic notion of love. She is not a victim to the craving for money, but a

victim to hypocrisy, especially to the hypocrisy that emanates from the dilemma between the contrived appearance of splendor and the lack of the moral vigor to sustain that splendor.

When the last part of the narration begins, Isabel knows that Osmond hates her intensely. She is aware that Osmond is always waiting for the opportunity to humiliate her. This hatred has already become "the occupation and comfort of his life" (356). It is a horrible life, but, paradoxically, Isabel cannot make herself hate Osmond, for she believes that Osmond's hatred is the result of disillusioned love.

Through Isabel's eyes, instead of a mere stereotypical image of an elegant fortune-hunter, we see other aspects of Osmond's personality. Isabel keeps the faith that when she decided to marry Osmond, they indeed loved each other. Even Ralph agrees with her on this count and admits that then Osmond was greatly in love with her (470). She knows that she has not paid enough attention to some parts of Osmond's personality, but the same thing happens to Osmond too. "He had discovered that she was so different, that she was not what he had believed she would prove to be" (350). Since she is dissatisfied with what she has found, how can she blame him for the hate evoked by his discovery? "It was not her fault--she had practised no deception" (349). If she could, she would have changed her personality to please him: "for every little while she felt a passionate wish to give him a pleasant surprise" (356). But she cannot. She knows that her life is dismal and her future holds little hope, but if all these are the price she has to pay for the love she believes she had once, she is not going to complain. Love is the art of imagination that creates one's own affective universe. When illusions disappear, one has to drink the bitter

wine by oneself. Isabel's life pattern is built on her belief in that love.

Isabel's notion of her own marriage puzzles the narrator, and his observation of the affair seems to lead to a different conclusion. Yet he then steps aside and lets Isabel speak her own thoughts on this regard. After her marriage, Isabel thinks a lot about her love, and cannot persuade herself to believe that she made a terrible mistake. She sees Osmond as the best gentleman in Europe, the man with the best taste in the world. He was and still is charming, handsome and intelligent. His helplessness and ineffectiveness gives him a type of tenderness. She knows that she was in love with him, and through this love perceived the happiness of a woman who felt that she was a contributor to something important. She was ardently intoxicated by Osmond's earnest affection and delighted by the inspiration she found in his qualities (351). In Isabel's mind, these are the symptoms of love. For her, love has nothing to do with good reasons (366). Feeling is all. She is thirsty of romantic spirit. The desire for romantic love is in harmony with her longing for freedom. Unfortunately, this desire constitutes a pitfall in her career.

At this point, we may wonder why the narrator and the persons around Isabel are disappointed in her genuine feelings. It is true that Isabel did not realize the whole issue behind Osmond's feeling for her. However, in a romantic way, love for a devil can still be a sublimely spiritual splendor. There is obviously a conflict between Isabel's viewpoint and those held by other characters, such as Ms. Touchett, a veteran of this European society. Here we find anther element of Isabel's innocence, which the narrator mentions when he introduces her to the reader for the first time. Before Isabel comes to Europe, her knowledge of the world is largely drawn from books. Due to circumstances in nineteenth-century America, the narrator

tells us, that what are available to Isabel and inspire her imagination are German philosophy, the London Spectator, the music of Gounod, the poetry of Browning, and the prose of George Eliot (33, 41). When she arrives in Europe, Isabel measures contemporary European society largely if not entirely through the knowledge she learned from the books of the passing generation.[46] She asks her uncle to explain things in light of her knowledge taken from these books (57). She says she does not trust Englishmen's attitude towards women, because "they're not nice to them in the novels" (58). She imitates the characters in the books, claiming that "I don't wish to touch the cup of experience. It's a poisoned drink!" (10) Her notion of love is rooted in the romantic affairs in these books. However, the narrator and other characters are living in contemporary world and certainly have a different point of view. William James, the author's brother, provides us with an observation about the notion of romantic love at this time, saying that at the time they were living, romantic adoration was only recorded in literature: "So powerful and instinctive an emotion can never have been recently evolved" (238). In this sense, the conflict between Isabel and the other characters when viewing the destiny of romantic love is the conflict between the grand notion of an innocent soul and a society that has once cherished this notion but already decided to abandon it.

Now, we are enmeshed in a network constrained by different viewpoints going in different directions. The narrator has to continue the narration but does not know what his heroine will decide to do. Rosier sees Isabel fit into her

[46] For instance, the middle point of the story (the open scene of the later part of the novel), as the author indicates explicitly, is 1876 (295). And George Eliot died in 1880, Chales Francois Gounod died in 1893.

new role perfectly and does not see any reason for a change. Madame Merle obviously wishes that Isabel would efface herself without taking the money away. Osmond seemingly entertains releasing the devilish energy repressed by his elegant appearance to torture his precious prize, even at the expense of his own further suffering. Ms. Touchett is surprised by the fact that Isabel sustains her integrity but still observes this development rather indifferently. Goodwood knows that Isabel is not happy, but cannot understand why she does not escape with him and has a new life in America. Stackpole doubts that this is because of Isabel's pride. Ralph and Warburton both discern Isabel's suffering and are eager to be help in any possible way, but find no way to persuade her to accept their help. Isabel herself is still speculating on her career, not knowing where to turn. What finally breaks the ice is Isabel's discovery of Osmond's hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is a grave violation to the belief in sincerity which Isabel holds dear and considers the essence of romantic love.[47]

It seems that in the later part of the narration, Isabel's will to act is stronger than the narrator's intent to compose a coherent story. The ending of the story is a surprise even to the narrator. Another episode that interrupts the coherence of the narration is that Isabel breaks the pattern of her life, countering Osmond's command by going to England to see Ralph. What virtually leads to the dramatic climax is not her devotion to her friendship with Ralph, but her own need to see Ralph. The quarrels between her and Osmond are not bad enough to move her to abandon the life she has adopted after the marriage. The final straw is the discovery of Osmond's deception.

[47] As the narration implies, one of the things that prevented Isabel from accepting Warburton's proposal was the gossips about the discrepancy between his deeds and his proclaimed political opinions.

For Isabel, the most dreadful thing about her relationship with Osmond is his deception. "She lost herself in infinite dismay when she thought of the magnitude of *his* deception" (352, the author's italics). When Madame Merle tells Isabel that she and Osmond planned her marriage, the narrator tells us that for the first time in Isabel's life, she realizes that there are *wicked* things in the real world (424, the author's italics). Isabel is not shocked by the fact that money has played a vital role in Osmond's resolve to marry her. Like sexual desire, financial considerations may become part of love if these form part of the man's response to the character and special qualities of the particular woman. What frightens Isabel is Osmond's feigned indifference to money.[48] For Isabel, treachery is the last vice she would attribute to Osmond, as it would destroy her illusion about their love and prove that he had taken advantage of her feelings. If it is true, then her willingness to suffer would be worthless. The information that eventually opens her eyes is learning that Osmond deceived his first wife. Isabel believes that Osmond is capable of almost anything except being a liar. When Osmond's sister tells Isabel how miserable his first wife was, she intuitively finds these implications deeply revealing of her own situation. With a sudden check, she realizes, "he must have been false to his wife--and so very soon!" (444) She has relied on the notion of love to survive the hatred he felt towards her. Now, this notion itself has fallen apart. She has lost the ground of her theory, feeling that she is dropping into unfathomable darkness. Isabel quarreled with Ralph before her marriage, and since then he symbolically became a measure of her judgment of Osmond.

[48] In her meditation, Isabel thought, "A man might marry a woman for her money perfectly well; the thing was often done. But at least he should let her know" (425).

At this turning point in life, what comes to her her mind is the thought: "Ah, I must see Ralph" (448). She needs to go back to the starting-point to regain the ground of her career, and think over the whole situation. Obviously, the narrator has granted his heroine's wish.

Now let us turn to Isabel's longing for freedom. Isabel is a person of great charm. In The Portrait the word "charming" occurs fairly often but remains unclearly defined. The word mainly shows someone's positive feeling toward a certain person. In Isabel's case, her spirt of independence is the nucleus of her charm. This notion of independence, in turn has different implications for different people. In the reader's perception Isabel's longing for freedom is a combination of these views, comprised of different interpretations of her insistence on independence, including that of the narrator, Isabel herself and other characters. The interaction of different viewpoints materializes in the narrator's control over the reader's mind.

It is no coincidence that Isabel's insistence on her own freedom attracts everyone's interests as soon as they get to know her. Throughout the entire novel, in one way or another almost all characters are involved in struggles to preserve the power to exercise their own wills. However, these struggles are fought with limited freedom. Mrs. Touchett also strongly claims her own independence. However, her will for freedom is limited to shying away from her family and indulging in her small circle in Florence. Given his father's money, Ralph might have had a certain power to execute his will, if he had chosen to, but he thinks that to better the world, his cynic attitude is even more important than his father's money. Warburton is trapped by his title and his way of living, even though he has radical political opinions. Henrietta

seemingly cultivates an instinctive dislike of European aristocracy, but virtually marries an English man who, as he himself shrewdly admits, has at least a convenient relationship to the aristocracy. Madame Merle seems welcomed everywhere in the world in which she wants to take part, but this is only because she skillfully models herself after other people's expectations of her. Gilbert Osmond's case is even more clear. He adheres to the elegance of the taste but lacks the substance to support it, living in a parasitic existence relying on other people. By introducing Isabel into the scene, the narrator throws a light on everyone's situation. Isabel's appearance prompts others to imagine what might have happened if they could have lived a life in which they were able to assert their wills more freely. Everyone responds to Isabel's insistence on the spirit of independence. Therefore, her struggle for personal freedom constitutes an axis that centripetally connects various episodes. The narrator's viewpoint is inscribed into the description of her struggle, and thus unifies the narrative.

Although in his Notebooks James says that his initial intention was only to tell a story about a girl who dreams of freedom but ends up a victim of convention (15), what the narrator conveys to us through The Portrait goes far beyond the personal tragedy of a doomed failure. There is a deep concern about a universal situation: few escape paths are available no matter how desperately people are trying to transcend the limitations of their particular circumstances. This thematic concern reveals itself not only in Isabel, who is unable to fulfill her will for freedom, but also in other characters who rely on their own experiences in evaluating her effort for independence.

In the novel, the first impression we get of Isabel is her independence, which comes to us through Mrs. Touchett's eyes (24). Isabel herself declares

that if there is a thing in the world she is fond of, it is her "personal independence" (140). She does not care much about being poor or rich and has no desire to be timid or conventional. The only class she belongs to, as she claims, is the "independent class" (141). However, although Isabel's desire for freedom lies deep in her personality, she remarks to Warburton that she does not appreciate the impression that she is doing whatever she wanted to do (75). From her own thoughts on personal independence, there are two elements we may take as the essence of her notion of independence. One is "to be free to follow out a good feeling" (287); the other is "to judge things for myself" (141).

Almost everyone in The Portrait wants to pursue freedom in his or her own way. The narrator deliberately defines the notion of freedom he sees it in Isabel by contrasting Isabel's will with others' will. For instance, Warburton's personal independence most likely conflicts with his lordship and properties. Thus, he has to be much more discreet in asserting his desire for freedom. In contrast, Isabel knows that she may be unhappy if she insists on her independence, but she almost welcomes this suffering if this is the price she has to pay. Thus, for Isabel, freedom does not mean freedom from unpleasant things. For Mrs. Touchett, being independent is to narrow down the scope of her actions so that she can negotiate the conflict between her personal preferences and convention. For Isabel, being independent is to challenge conventions and to act upon her personal originality. Thus for Isabel, freedom does not mean accommodating to the restraints imposed by a tacit mandate. To Stackpole, freedom means being frank and bold, while to Madame Merle, freedom is to gain an adequate means to accomplish her ambition; Isabel disagrees with both of them. Unlike her sister Lilian, Isabel does not see

freedom as being liberated from a limited means of living. Against Osmond's suspicions, Isabel does not pursue wifely independence as the goal of her personal life. The freedom Isabel pursues is creating in which her feeling and judgment are free from other person's assessments and conventional claims of propriety.

The narrator informs us that Isabel's notion of freedom is too sophisticated for Goodwood, her American friend (141). Goodwood simply thinks that Isabel is obsessed with her independence and predicts that she will get "very sick" of it (142). Yet Isabel's desire for freedom echoes the Victorian notion of the perfection of human nature. This notion, as Mathew Arnold states in Culture and Anarchy, is the human obligation to one's best to fulfill all inspired needs (150). In Isabel's case, the narrator states, "she was always planning out her development, desiring her perfection, observing her progress" (55). However, in The Portrait the practicality of this notion is seriously questioned, not merely by Goodwood, but, more significantly, by the narrator.

In his Notebooks, James writes that by and large The Portrait is a "psychological" novel that depends little on incident (15). The term "psychological" is not used in the sense we commonly use it today as a synonym of "psychoanalytic." In other words, what the word focuses are not the mental activities in various characters' minds, but the conflicting viewpoints among the characters. On the same page in the Notebooks, James promises that after Isabel's marriage he will make some compensation for the lack of dramatic action. However, in the last part of the novel, there are only two actions that dramatise the course of narration. One is that Isabel leaves Osmond and goes back to Gardencourt to see Ralph, which is expected. The

other is that she decides to go back to Rome, which is an anticlimactic climax. The Portrait is a human drama, for together with the dramatic incidents, it seems to me, the main portion of the dramatic power in this novel draws from the dramatization of different viewpoints in conflict. Some incidents, such as when Ralph gives Isabel money, even lessen the plot's frame. For having received this amount of money, Isabel financially has no problem turning down a proposal of marriage she does not like, and there is less pressure on her which otherwise might have dramatised the course of events. These incidents, however, intensify the potential conflicts of the viewpoints, for Isabel now gains more power to insist on her own ideas. Bolstered by the ripe luxury of Gardencourt and Rome, James uses these slow moving to magnify the conflicts of his and the characters' reflections on those actions instead of the actions themselves. Reflections on the potential action precede the action and turn out to be part of the motive in initiating the action. Reflections on an actual action inevitably follow the action as an result of the interested party's thinking. Thus, singling out human reflections on possible and completed actions as a central layer of human affair is what James remarkably achieves by exploring the potential of narrative art.

In The Portrait, Isabel's longing for her own independence is always countered by other people's suggestions to regulate this desire in ways sanctioned by certain conventions. Warburton complains, "You only care to amuse yourself" (77). Stackpole urges her to marry Goodwood, the ideal American industrialist, and thus end her search for freedom. Madame Merle advises her to realize that "we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances" (172), and that one should mold oneself after other people's

expectations (173). The conflicting attitudes towards life that create the largest gap is that between Isabel and Osmond. These encounters not only challenge Isabel's uncompromising pursuit of her own independence, but also actually pose a question for the narrator. Is it indeed possible for a person to follow freely his or her own feelings and judgments? A person's feelings and judgments are always mingled with certain kinds of conventions. If one tries to escape a particular convention, he or she needs support from other people who are also struggling to do so, in order to survive. Paradoxically, this not always successful attempt also starts new conventions. In The Portrait Isabel represents a person searching for freedom, whose spirit is not yet trapped in a new convention. Isabel once tries to end her search through love, but the disillusionment of her marriage actually liberates her spirit once more. After Ralph's death, she starts wondering again. The narrator never gives us the impression that she is trapped by her marital obligations. Isabel herself observes, "One must choose a corner and cultivate that" (283). The problem becomes where this type of spirit should land and transform itself into something consonant with its essence. The narrator, who gives us the story, seems not as optimistic as Ralph, who, as we noted before, somehow stands more closely to the author than the narrator, and seems to see things differently from the narrator.

Unlike other people who complain that Isabel is much too self-centered, Ralph encourage her interest in herself as long as she still pursues her freedom (131). He appreciates the spirit of freedom but knows that he himself would never escape his given situation. Ralph wants to see Isabel as the sound agent of his crippled spirit which longs to break conventions. In this sense, he confesses to Isabel, "I content myself with watching you--with the deepest

interest" (Ibid.). He wishes that Isabel can enrich her career by marrying a person who has a "more active, larger, freer sort of nature" (282). However, the narrator simply cannot offer a person who might fit into Ralph's category and be able to replace Osmond's position in Isabel's life. After Isabel's marriage, the narrator informs us, Ralph spends most of his time in speculating upon a solution for Isabel, as he knows that Isabel needs a rationale for her next move (471), but cannot produce one. At the end of his life, he does his best to give Isabel a spiritual ground to start a new phase of her career. This ground still encompasses the notion of love, for Ralph at the end of his life finds that life is meaningless if there is no love, and that all things pass but love remains (470-71). The new notion of love is different from the notion of love Isabel conceived of when she decided to marry Osmond, and explicates some unnoticed elements in the previous narration. It thus persuades the narrator to alter rather abruptly the course of the narration. If we consider that Ralph sometimes speaks for James himself, we may see the novel's ending as the result of the conflict between the narrator's loyalty to the logic of story and the author's intention to carry out a preconceived theme.

The enlightened notion of love Ralph suggests to Isabel conveys the meaning of life, as it is an altruistic emotion universally shared by people through generations. Ralph's own love for Isabel is an example. It transcends money fetishism, sexual possession and the exclusive devotion to a particular person. It lacks a romantic demeanor and appearance but assumes a dimension larger than the notion of love Isabel previously cherished. However, at the time when Ralph first expresses his notion of love to her, Isabel does not grasp

its significance fully. The later meetings with Warburton and Goodwood help effect her mature realization of this notion.

The narration of the relationship between Isabel and Warburton contains an aspect that does not readily come to our attention if we occupy ourselves with the plot. This is the emotion stirred in Isabel's heart by Warburton's altruistic devotion. Although Warburton's attitude towards Isabel is not at all aggressive, his image keeps intruding itself into Isabel's consciousness. Osmond's extreme egotism serves as a mirror to reflect Warburton's altruism. Warburton has what Osmond is proud of: nobility, proper manners, a graceful appearance, intelligence, a delightful personality and cultured tastes. What Warburton has but Osmond lacks are a tender deposition and a rich inner world. At the end of the story, Isabel does not lie to her aunt when she says that she is not sorry not to have married Warburton. She never wants to sacrifice herself to the bond with conventional society which he is unable to sever. However, Warburton's tender, profound and persistent love makes Isabel experience towards him a strong attachment, emotional dependency, and even occasional jealousy. Warburton shows his unselfish emotions to her, especially after her marriage. After his own engagement, when he realizes the difficulties Isabel face, he still offers her his invitation, which indeed reminds Isabel of his altruistic feelings. This recognition probably makes her realize the difference between the love she now grieves over losing and the type of love Ralph has proposed. This realization may strengthen her capacity to recognize such emotions, which reaches its complete realization when Goodwood kisses her.

Needless to say, Goodwood is the most inspiring example of Ralph's enlightened notion of love. Isabel knows that among her suitors, only

Goodwood devotes himself entirely to his love for her: "Deep in her breast she believed that he had invested his all in her happiness, while the others had invested only a part" (398). At the beginning of her career, when the world seemingly promises everything Isabel dreams of, she inwardly sneers at the transparency of Goodwood's manner. Now, in contrast with Osmond's deception which exposes the world's wicked aspect, Goodwood's persistent effort to bring her a better life symbolizes the world's bright aspect. Before the last scene between Isabel and Goodwood, this bright side already reveals itself in Isabel's recognition of the deeper meaning of Warburton's love and Ralph's help. "She had wanted help, and here was help; it had come in a rushing torrent" (481). For her, the world opens up again in the light of her understanding of Ralph's notion of love. Since these people who love her so deeply were neither her husbands nor her lovers, isn't it possible for her to separate the notion of love from sexual and matrimonial bonds, and give it to people who need it, like Pansy for instance? After her meetings with Warburton and Goodwood, the narrator admits, "she had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path" (482). Goodwood's manhood pleases her, but it also implies the sexual possession which is not included in this enlightened notion of love. To explain why Isabel finally decides to go back Rome, the most convincing reasons we can find in the text are Isabel's acceptance of Ralph's notion of love and her refusal to be caged again by sexual possession. In other words, exploring some hidden meaning of the previous narration is the only way the narrator can carry out the author's intention to perceive Isabel's spiritual approach to life.

Yet in Isabel's case, the pursuit for the personal freedom is a doomed

struggle. If Isabel's spirit was going to rely on the idea of altruism, it obviously was not going to travel far. In other words, the story's ending not only provides a solution that may sustain the integrity of the heroine's personality, but also, more significantly, reveals the narrator's viewpoint in telling the story. If Isabel's marriage indicates that the pursuit of the personal freedom can only succeed in a very limited sense for whoever pursues it, then the ending of the story signals that no matter how little freedom an individual may achieve, the pursuit itself will never stop. The struggle is doomed, but is still a struggle, not to give in no matter how severe the circumstances become or how many failures occur. The struggle is doomed to assert itself through failures. The narrator sculpts this perspective through the interaction of his own views with those of the characters and even the author's viewpoint.

In the West, Henry James was among the first novelists to put more stress on point of view than on characterization. Bolstered by both theory and practice, in the new trend of contemporary critical theory, point of view is not merely a narrative technique that enables the writer to represent the described scene in a more effective way. It is, as James claims in his Preface to The Portrait and as we have observed in the novel, an aperture without which a certain part of the human scene can never be represented (7). In the Preface, James concludes the discussion of his strategy of characterization by proposing an innovative "literary form." This form, in his opinion, will allow the reader "a million" windows to look into the life narrated. In other words, the narrative form is a structure that allows for a diversity of different characters' viewpoints. Each character's version of the described life should "appear more true to its character in proportion as it strains, or tends to burst,

with a latent extravagance, its mould" (Ibid.). A literary work has both external and internal forms. The external form is the textual formation, the internal form, in the case of narrative, is the narrator's perspective.

The Narrator's Perspective and Fictionalization in Narrative: Luo Guanzhong's Three Kingdoms

The narrator's perspective sustains the integrality of a narrative. It structures the narrative internally. In addition, in itself it is part of what a reader wants to learn. To read a narrative is not merely to learn about the characters and episodes described in the narrative. It is also involves the process of seeing the way in which the narrator arranges the characters and episodes. The insight revealed in this arrangement is, to a certain extent, even more significant for the reader. In narrative works, fictionalization is a peculiar way to project the narrator's perspective with intended emphases. In Chinese fiction, the enhancement of the narrator's perspective through fictionalization is particularly remarkable. We may see it especially in the novels that rewrite historical records. Among these novels, Luo Guanzhong's 羅貫中 *Sanguo Yanyi* 三國演義 (Three Kingdoms) is a prominent example.

Three Kingdoms is a novel that has had billions readers in over five hundred years. As Moss Roberts, the translator of the English version, points out, it is an integral part of Chinese culture (937). It has influenced Chinese thought and behavior largely for two reasons. On the one hand, based on the

official history *Sanguo Zhi* 三國志 (Records of Three Kingdoms), it popularizes the stories that occurred in the so-called "Three Kingdoms Period" (184-280); on the other hand, it substantiates values the Chinese cherish as the essence of their lives, such as honesty, bravery, loyalty, wisdom, benevolence, brotherhood, and the sacrifice of oneself for righteousness.

Although historicity holds little temptation for common readers, critics constantly measure the merits of Three Kingdoms by the standard of how truthfully it represents history. A typical example is Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠, an erudite scholar in the eighteenth century, who devalues the novel for the reason that only two-thirds of the novel's events have historical references (44). C. T. Hsia disagrees with critics like Zhang, maintaining that the strength of the novel lies precisely in its fictivity. However, he considers fictional elaboration merely to be a means to help the reader restore the actuality of history (The Classic Chinese Novel 35), for the traditional pattern of historical narration breaks history up into a series of individual and collective biographies. The fictional aspects surpass the limitations of historical narration and bring us the ultimate sense of fate with greater clarity (74). Hsia insists on calling this novel an epic, for he feels that instead of adventures and fantasies, the novel's narrative interest lies solely in the historicity of the displayed drama (34). In contrast, Andrew Plaks is one of a few scholars who urge us to shift our attention from the time of the narrated events to the time of the author. In his words, "we must immediately shift our interest in the novel's reflection of its historical context to the political and intellectual developments of later Ming reigns--when we know for certain that the book as we have it was published and read" (366). Plaks asks us to read

the novel as an allegorical rendering of the historical sources, which actually reflects the political concerns and the intellectual trends of the author's time (375).

Plaks's statement about "when we know for certain that the book as we have it was published and read" is a subtle but crucial one. It dismisses[49] the time span between the date of 1330 to 1400 (when the author Luo Guanzhong reportedly lived) and the date of 1552 (when the first edition, so far we can see, was published, though its Preface is dated as 1497). During this time period, Chinese society under the Ming underwent significant changes. Thus, if we intend to locate the significance of the novel in the author's intentions instead of the historical events narrated in the novel, it would be a big issue to bridge this time gap. However, like the historicity of the narrated events, the date of composition is still another layer related to the historical authenticity. The actuality of events and the date of authorship are both significant for understanding a novel, but neither of them is the sole source of its significance. Beyond its historical authenticity, for a reader living in neither the Three Kingdoms period nor the Ming dynasty, the strength of the novel lies rather in the text itself.

Related to the date of authorship is the question of anonymity. Interestingly, anonymity is characteristic of Chinese fiction. Digging into the author's biographical background in order to interpret a fiction is a modern phenomenon. In the history of Chinese literature, unlike reading poetry, readers of fiction are generally satisfied if there is a name which claims authorship, even though they know perfectly that it is a pseudonym. Critics rarely pay attention to the connection between the author's life and the

[49] Plaks himself has made a brief argument to defend his position (366).

narrative intention in the text. If something is intended to be communicated, it should be done through the story itself. The critical focus is on textual arrangements and narrative strategies, since it is these that accentuate the intended meaning. This characteristic displays itself particularly in the genre called *huaben* 話本 (prompt scriptures), comprised of those versions of novels prepared especially for oral storytelling performances. Luo Guanzhong relies on various sources for composing Three Kingdoms, one being some popular *huaben* 話本 of the same story. As Hu Shiyin 胡士瑩 observes in his *Huaben Xiaoshuo Gailun* 話本小說概論 (A Brief Introduction to *huaben* fiction), in the Song dynasty (960-1279), prior to the time when Luo Guanzhong wrote his novel, there were certain literary associations in which writers gathered together and made a collective effort to write a single work in order to meet the need for prompt scriptures (65-70). In other words, if we see the author as a writer who has a definite viewpoint to convey through his or her work, in these Chinese fictions called *huaben*, one can hardly find an identifiable author from which to establish a connection between the possible author and the conceived narrator. As a matter of fact, we do not even know who these writers are. In their anonymity, these writers have interwoven an elaborate perspective into the narrative, which readers may perceive without tracing it back to the authors. In this sense, Plaks has his reasons for urging us to shift the critical attention from an individual author to the social and intellectual milieu which influenced the composition of the novel.

Chinese readers of Chinese fiction normally expect to find a certain perspective from which the narrator organizes episodes and events to make a story. In both small pieces as short as that in *Shishuo Xinyu* 世說新語 (A New Account of Tales of the World) and grand volumes as lengthy as the Three

Kingdoms, the foremost function of narrative is to convey a judgment on certain types of value. In ancient China, the morals that regulated people's behavior were not founded on a religious basis. Sages in their teachings used historical episodes to illustrate the principles of life. However, these historical examples lacked the sacred aura that might help maintain their authority. The values which people held to measure their relationships were essentially formulated by Confucianism. The essence of Confucianism consists in ways of dealing with human relationships, centered on prime moral concepts such as *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *yi* 義 (righteousness), *zhong*忠 (loyalty), *cheng*誠 (honesty), and *xin* 信 (trustworthiness). However, Confucius almost never defined these notions accurately. For instance, in the Analects, the concept of *ren* 仁 is actually referred to as the principle (integrity) of people's behaviors which supposedly strengthens the proper relationships among people. Thus, on different occasions, this term could be and has indeed been translated as "goodness," "true manhood," "perfect virtue" "benevolence," "love" or "humanity." Confucius raises this concept in order to draw a line between the shoulds and the shouldn'ts regarding certain types of human relationships. Each concept circumscribes a range of morality, but the exact definition of the concept largely depends on the interpretation of the person dealing with a particular situation. The general meaning of the concept consists of an assembly of particular examples that illustrate the concept. In this respect, a narrative is a major means to particularize moral standards by its subtle judgments on the narrated events and characters. When the question of how to identify virtue in human behavior comes up, those values esteemed in Three Kingdoms, for instance, are much more influential on

Chinese reader's minds than scholars' exegeses of Confucian classics. In Three Kingdoms Guan Yu is the embodiment of *yi* 義 (righteousness) for almost everyone and even is worshiped for the virtue he stands for. Liu Bei is *ren* 仁 (benevolence), Zhuge liang *zhi* 智 (wisdom), and Zhang Fei *yong*勇 (bravery). Given the nature of aesthetic entertainment, these fictionalized characters are more appealing to the reader than the heavy moral judgments espoused by philosophers. Through fictionalization, the narrator's perspective on these virtues exercises a much more intense impact on the reader's mind.

How to measure the historicity of narrated facts in a fictional narrative like Three Kingdoms has always been a controversial issue among Chinese critics. Recently, there has been a strong tendency to consider history a burden on the Chinese and to view novels like Three Kingdoms as evidence of this burden. Both history and this type of novel, it is asserted, are dragging Chinese civilization backward. This is, of course, a simplistic assertion. In the case of the novel, turning to historical materials is not necessarily a sign of nostalgia. Instead of worshiping a Godhead, indigenous Chinese civilization worships ancestors. Things in the past exhibit a certain standard of value. Confucius even insists that that we can have a version of human perfection in past generations. Therefore, the past more often than not stands for something sacredness, which is similar to the reverence for God's believers we may find in some other civilizations. What exactly where those perfect things in the past, Confucius confesses not knowing, though he actually relies on the glorified past for the authority to preach his own ideas. This is the basic pattern adopted by Chinese writers. They refer to historical situations for the purpose of justifying their own ideas about the present or future. Novelists do

the same thing in writing historical novels. Whether this way of thinking is passive or positive is not the issue here. The point I am arguing is that we should not let the consideration of historicity bias our minds when interpreting a historical novel. The power that integrates a narrative is the narrator's perspective. In a historical novel fictionalization is a major way of projecting the narrator's perspective.

In 1990, Princeton University Press published a book entitled How to Read the Chinese Novel. It is a source book of traditional Chinese criticism of fiction with excellent introductions. Among the translations, there is a critical article by Mao Zonggang 毛宗崗 on how to read Three Kingdoms (146-195). Mao (1632-?) was the most successful editor of Three Kingdoms,[50] and just about everyone now reads the Mao edition of Three Kingdoms. He is also one of the most influential critics of Three Kingdoms. For the interpretation of a historical fiction, he advocates reading the novel as a popular and entertaining version of history. In his opinion, the purport of Three Kingdoms is to claim the legitimacy of the Han regimes under Liu Bei's rule, even though this contradicts the historical facts. The historian Chen Shou 陳壽 (223-291) didn't clarify the issue of legitimacy when he wrote the official history *Sanguo Zhi* 三國志 (The History of the Three Kingdoms). Therefore, following the notion proposed by the renowned Confucian scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), Mao intends to use the novel Three Kingdoms as a means to correct the "distorted" view of history then current (156). Mao's

[50] It is commonly acknowledged that Mao inherited some portions of his father's work in editing the novel. See Cai Zhongxiang 蔡鍾翔 's article "Mao Zonggang" in *Zhongguo Dabaike Quanshu-Zhongguo Wenxue* 中國大百科全書- 中國文學 (Chinese Encyclopedia: Chinese Literature).

commentary leads us back to the question of how to interpret a historical novel. It is true that under the spell of the narrator's viewpoint, the reader's sympathy is always with Liu's group. Now, the question is whether the fictionalization of the historical figures in this novel aims to justify the royal lineage. Isn't it possible that this sympathy is based on an appreciation of the fictionalized personal merits of the characters instead of the loyalty to the factual royal inheritance?

In order to reinforce his interpretation of the novel, Mao Zonggang made some changes to the text. If we compare the Mao Edition to the Jiajing Edition (嘉靖本, 1522, the earliest version we know), it is not difficult to discover Mao's efforts at glorifying the Han House. For instance, the added opening argues for the legitimacy of the Han dynasty that once unified the then divided country. And, looking at the Jiajing Edition, we find that the characters' names which the author puts into the chapter titles are plainly there, without the attached discriminatory terms that show the author's attitude towards the characters. In contrast, in the Mao Edition the term *zei* 賊 (thief, traitor, treacherousness) occurs fairly often, as used to condemn the persons who betray the legitimate court. Also, as Lu Xun 魯迅 observes in his *Zhongguo Xiaoshuo Shilue* 中國小說史略 (A Brief History of Chinese Fiction), Mao changes some stories, such as that of Empress Can in Chapter 159 of the Jiajing Edition, to show people's compassion for the Han House (274-75). In addition, as Moss Roberts points out in the Afterword to his translation of Three Kingdoms, Mao drops a crucial line in the Jiajing Edition: "The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire; he who has virtue shall possess it" (944). However, in spite of these changes, Mao cannot significantly change the narrator's perspective which, as we observed above, has been elaborately

built up throughout the entire text.

The narrator of Three Kingdoms has a definite attitude toward Liu Bei and Cao Cao, two major characters and rivals in the novel. The story is built on the contrast between the moralities typified by them respectively. Before Luo Guanzhong put the story into book form, with folklore there was already a prevailing opinion on these two historical figures. In the Sung dynasty, three hundred years before Luo, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) recorded young audiences' reactions to the stories about Liu Bei and Cao Cao: in the marketplace, while listening to the storyteller's narration, the teenagers frowned and even got tears in their eyes when they heard of Liu's setback, and cried out with joy when they heard of Cao's defeat (123). On the one hand, Liu's repeated defeats and Cao's continued successes in the war for the imperial power are historical facts. On the other hand, the fictional narratives keep digging into the moral values which the defeated reportedly possesses. If the emphasis of the fictionalization is not on the historical coincidence of moral virtue with political successes, as Mao claims it should be, then, what is the narrator's perspective intensified by the fictionalization in Three Kingdoms?

One central idea of Three Kingdoms has been expounded consistently: the notion that glory acquired through political and martial power is much less desirable than glories acquired through moral means. This notion is exhibited not only in the motif that virtuous people stand on one side and villains on the other, but also through internal conflicts within one's own personality. The world's judgment of people's morality is a special aspect in Chinese culture. Unlike in some other civilizations, in the Chinese tradition there is no religious idea about the afterlife in which people will be rewarded

or punished based on their behavior in their earthly lives. One's conscience is the main motivation for a person to behave virtuously. Therefore, a strong need for the people living in this culture is building a moral imperative through those examples by which one can personally perceive situations similar to the ones he or she has to deal with. In this respect, Three Kingdoms is not merely a story created for entertainment, but, more significantly, is a model that demonstrates certain moral standards for the persons who read it. And this model, I should add, is an unorthodox one.

In Three Kingdoms there is a constant conflict between the story line that brings the historical events and characters together and the thematic line that centers on the ethical values displayed. In the tradition of treating fiction as a supplement to history, Mao Zonggang postulates that this conflict is meant to produce a sense in coming generations of respecting royal legitimacy in history. Nevertheless, as a fiction the novel has its own interest. As a matter of fact, if we shift our attention from its historicity to its fictivity, it would not be groundless to assume that the historical facts selected for the novel are mainly vehicles used to convey such moral values as benevolence, wisdom, bravery, righteousness, loyalty, honesty and trustworthiness. The narrator's perspective actually preserves these virtues for as long as we are still reading the novel and making our own history.

Fictionalization is a particular way of textualization. It textualizes the imaginative understanding of the narrated events. Luo Guanzhong claims that his novel is based on Chen Shou's 陳壽 *Sanguo Zhi* 三國志 (The History of the Three Kingdoms).[51] In the case of Liu Bei, in Chen's History, there are

[51] In its early version, of its authorship, Luo signs as "chronicled and biographed by Chen Shou; compiled and rearranged by Luo Guanzhong" (晉平陽侯陳壽史傳，後學羅本貫中編次).

some attributes which combined make Liu Bei unique if we compare him to other historical figures. A forgotten descendant of the Han royal family, Liu Bei was a good warrior who mastered martial and political strategies through seemingly endless failures. In the social turmoil of his time, he started out as a shoe vendor and became the emperor of a kingdom. Ambitious and eager to gather chivalrous youths into a group around him, he disregarded differences in social status; respected and trusted his subordinates; and dealt with his relationships to other people with good nature and skill. Liu Bei constantly let those persons around him know that he was willing to sacrifice his ambition to their interests. This historical figure of Liu Bei lays the groundwork for the fictional figure of Liu Bei, who in the History declares, "To accomplish a grand undertaking, one has to rely on people as the ground" (877). At the end of Liu's biography in the History Chen comments that Liu's determined insistence on moral principle, his tolerance, his understanding of people, and his respect for intellectuals were the means that made him into a hero, and that he indeed inherited the spirit of the founder of the Han dynasty. However, in terms of personal shrewdness, political manipulation, pragmatical capability, and strategic planning, he did not rival Cao Cao. This disadvantage limited his chances of winning the battle for the empire (892). In the novel, Liu is further deprived of these practical qualities which he needed for success. Moral integrity is the focus which the author has chosen for the narrator's perspective when describing the characteristics of Liu Bei's personality.

From the historical Liu Bei's personality, the narrator of Three Kingdoms elaborates on two qualities in creating the fictional image of Liu Bei.

One is Liu Bei's blood connection to the royal house that justifies his claim to the throne. The other is his benevolence. The narrator distributes other aspects of the historical Liu Bei's personality to some other fictional characters, letting them play the roles which were actually played by Liu Bei in history. For instance, in the History, it is Liu Bei who ordered to beat the Provincial Inspector, and then abandoned his position as the county magistrate and fled (872). In the novel, it is Zhang Fei, one of Liu's sworn brothers and a general famous for his boldness and courage, who whips the Provincial Inspector and forces Liu to leave his post (Chap. 2). Instead of a chivalrous hero, in the novel, Liu rather strikes the reader as an ambitious but lenient leader, always hesitant when making a decision. And, contrary to the historical facts reported in the History , the narrator ignores Liu Bei's capability in martial battles and gives full credit to Zhuge Liang for planning the successful war strategies and tactics, attributing Liu's every significant victory to the wisdom of Zhuge Liang. The narrator sets Liu Bei at the center of the story in the very first chapter; the first episode that sets the overall tone of the novel is the pledge Liu makes with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei in the Peach Garden to swear brotherhood. The fictional Liu Bei is a creation. The created image tells us that the bond in human relations is much more admirable and desirable than some other commonly celebrated merits, such as personal shrewdness, political manipulations, pragmatic capabilities, even though the latter qualities may enable one to win military victories and obtain political power.

Mao Zonggang suggests that the theme of Three Kingdoms is justifying for the mandate of the Han reign. But this postulate is not well supported by

the text. In the Jiajing Edition, the very first thing the novel tells us is that the court of the Han reign is too corrupt to function as a ruling system. Even in the Mao Edition, there is an explicit statement that occurs repeatedly, saying that "the longevity of the Han reigns has already come to its end" (586).[52] The justification for the Han rule is also related to the intention of "Heaven." In the Chinese tradition, "Heaven" is a vague notion, commonly used as the symbol of a supernatural power that grants a reign its legitimacy. In Three Kingdoms, Heaven gives His blessing in such an arbitrary way that one can hardly decide whose side Heaven really is on. Sometimes He dispenses omens to warn Cao's army to escape traps; sometimes He favors Liu's army by giving it extraordinary power to change the course of a battle. He even saves Liu Bei's life more than once. In the novel, people feels nostalgia for life under the previous Han reigns, because they believes that they may live peacefully if they can restore the previous order (116). They do not really care whether the name of the emperor is Liu or Cao, as what they want is an emperor who can rule the country with benevolence and authority.

In the novel, when Cao Pi, Cao Cao's eldest son, plans to take over the court, Hua Xin, one of his ministers, justifies Cao's act by arguing that in Chinese history it is a common practice to change the ruler, and that there have been many examples set up even by sages like Yao 堯, Shun 舜 (675). At the time of Liu Bei and Cao Cao, the disintegration of the Han reign actually offered an opportunity for all those who had political ambitions. In the novel Liu Bei is one of those who are eager to assert their ambitions at the time of social turmoil. What makes him distinct from the others is the royal blood. The

[52] I have consulted with Moss Roberts's translation frequently. However, unless otherwise noted, all the quotations from Three Kingdoms in this essay are my own translations.

connection to the royal house attracts those who has sworn their loyalty to the declining dynasty and inspires hope in those who crave to restore the lost order. Liu Bei never stops using this advantage for his own benefit, claiming that the country should be reunified under the old dynasty's name. However, this claim does not necessarily represent the narrator's viewpoint. In the novel the eternity of the Han house is obviously not the narrator's concern. Considering the historical fact that Liu Bei was a descendant of the royal house, we may say that the narrator actually reveals the frailty of political power in expounding this connection: in the novel what remains of the once-mighty royal glory is now merely a clever ruse to solicit people's sympathy in winning the battle among warriors as to who will rule. As a warrior, Liu Bei is a weak echo of the glory of his ancestors. On the one hand, the narrator strengthens those moral values through a rearrangement of the historical record; on the other hand, in contrast with the endurance of moral values, the narrator implies that the decline of political power is an inevitable consequence that spares no one.

A story without an elaborated perspective is a story that possesses no depth. In Three Kingdoms, this elaboration is helped by fictionalization, Fictionalization lends the characters a subtlety which the History lacks. In Chinese fiction, there is a pattern of storytelling that strengthens the narrator's perspective. Unlike The Portrait of a Lady in which the narrator mainly reckons on the manipulation of the combined effect of different characters' viewpoints to project his own standing, in Three Kingdoms (as in some other major Chinese fiction), the revelation of the narrator's perspective is associated with the antagonism within a particular character's personality.

For instance, the narrator sometimes creates an image of a character who is a coward but who has enough decency to respect other persons' feelings, in order to win the reader's sympathy with that decency. The narrator may even intensify this sympathy by persuading the reader to forgive the character's cowardice. Likewise, sometimes a character is extraordinarily intelligent but also a liar. This image is meant to evoke disgust at duplicity even at the price of denigrating a character's intelligence, even though intelligence is a highly praised quality. The fictional images of Liu Bei and Cao Cao offer two examples of this pattern.

Both Liu Bei and Cao Cao were founders of a kingdom. In Three Kingdoms, the narrator neglects to dwell on those qualities and capabilities which, according to the History, were shared by both of them. He lays down a special quality as a unique ground for each of their success. Cao Cao once tells Liu Bei that he and Liu are the only heroes capable of unifying the country (185). However, what makes him and what makes Liu Bei heroic are different characteristics. Liu Bei's heroism rests on his relentless insistence on benevolence; Cao Cao's rests on his ruthlessness in political campaigns and military battles. The narrator sets a contrast between these two qualities, each of which upholds Liu and Cao's respective political and military successes. Thus, in the fictional narration, the narrator interprets the historical conflicts in a peculiar way and expounds the application of moral significance through these particular occasions.

Although Liu Bei's personality is somewhat weak in the novel, there is a profound quality we are apt to attach to Liu Bei's image as we comprehend the whole narration of Three Kingdoms. In the narration the narrator relies on other people's attitudes toward LIu Bei and creates a hyperbolized sense of

sagacity about him. The narrator constantly describes other people's persistent beliefs in Liu's benevolent intentions, even though these intentions rarely develop from promise into achievement. In the novel, Liu Bei is ambitious for a successful political career but incompetent in martial battle, although these are the only means by which to accomplish the political success at that time. However, Liu Bei has his own merits. He puts his fate in the hands of some capable persons with an innocent if not blind trust. For instance, when Cao Cao has Xu Shu's mother in custody and forces Xu Shu to leave Liu Bei and pledge allegiance to him, Shun Gan, an advisor to Liu Bei, warns Liu Bei about the risk he will he take if he lets Xu Shu go. Shun Gan points out that Xu Shu has proven his talents in martial strategies and that he also possesses crucial information of Liu's army. Shun Gan's suggestion is to retain Xu and force Cao Cao to kill Xu's mother as he threatens, thereby making Xu Shu Cao's sworn enemy. Liu Bei rejects Shun Gan's advice without hesitation (313).

In the novel Liu Bei is frequently cheated by the people whom he trusts. Cao Cao, who is good at using his intelligence to take advantage of other people, is a foil the narrator uses to set off Liu's merits. Cao Cao's smartness at using others, as the narrator shows this, partly results from his fear of being fooled by others. What makes Liu Bei's blind trust praiseworthy is his belief that people are the most important element in the world, both as the means to success and as the ultimate price of success. The devotion to brotherhood is another example of Liu Bei's trust in human relationships. For a political and military leader, Liu Bei's unyielding devotion to his sworn brotherhood is obviously a drawback. In the novel, Liu Bei refuses to listen to Zhuge Liang

and launches a war against the Wu Kingdom to avenge his sworn brother Guan Yu's death. This war eventually leads to his own death and the decline of his kingdom. To sacrifice the future of his empire for the sake of brotherhood is a fictional exaggeration. Under the narrator's spell, stupidity in political and military affairs actually enlarges the loyalty to brotherhood. Under the pressure of circumstances, Liu Bei constantly breaks his proclaimed morality, such as keeping his army away from his relatives' territories. However, the narrator makes sincere Liu's intention to stick with his morals. The narrator uses the common people's reactions to show the enthusiastic response to Liu Bei's benevolent policies. They believe in his sincerity and do not care what the actual consequences will be. Tens of thousands of people abandon their homes and even sacrifice their lives to follow him, for Liu Bei gives them the hope of a government that will rejuvenate the moral principles they had treasured for generations (353). The weakness as exposed in Liu's personality actually delivers a message: a person who has moral strength is much more admirable than a person who is merely a shrewd strategist in politics and warfare.

In the novel Cao Cao's character is another example showing that fictionalization may sharpen the narrator's viewpoint. In the History, Cao Cao was a successful politician and warrior. He knew how to use people but never trusted them. He realized how important it was to enforce rigid rules and laws in a chaotic society, but paid little attention to the harmful consequences to innocent people. His interest was solely in pragmatic matters; he was rarely concerned with moral consideration. Once, when Liu Bei was defeated by Lu Bu and came to Cao Cao to seek shelter, he had the chance to eliminate Liu before Liu became a strong rival, but did not do as Cheng Yu suggested .

However, it is not because Cao Cao had any moral conscience and didn't want to take advantage of the situation, but because he was afraid that it would scare away other heroic persons who might be helpful to his course (14). He once revealed to Yuan Shao his secret of success: "I give opportunities to those who have intelligence and strength, letting them fulfill their potential, and control them with the Way, therefore, I can do anything I want to do" (26). The Way he endeavored to follow, as Chen Shou points out in his commentary at the end of Cao's biography, is the principles proposed by the practitioners of Legalism, such as Shen Buhai 申不害 (ca. 385-337 B.C.) and Shang Yang 商鞅 (ca. 390-338 B.C.). In their interpretation of human nature, the Legalists are in conflict with what the narrator of Three Kingdoms espouses. Legalist practices are based on the assumption that human nature is congenitally tempted by evil, and therefore needs to be manipulated by discipline but not inspired by virtues. Through the image of Cao Cao, the narrator in Three Kingdoms ridicules this idea by taking it to its extreme.

In Three Kingdoms fictionalization builds a delicate balance between two sets of merits. One is that of moral virtues, such as benevolence, humanity, generosity, piety, loyalty, honesty, fidelity, tolerance, and moral empathy; the other is that of intelligence and intrepidness, such as shrewdness, ingenuity, wit, skillfulness, and boldness. In the light cast by the narrator, the merits in the second set should combine with the merits in the first set in order to achieve human perfection. For instance, if ingenuity is integrated with generosity, as we can see in Zhuge Liang, then it turns out to be *zhi* 智 (wisdom); if associated with vanity, as in Zhou Yu and Peng Tong, then it merely appears as *zongming* 聰明 (shrewdness); if it is motivated by some

evil spirit, as is a great portion of Cao Cao's behaviors, then it is *jian* 奸 (wiliness). At the beginning of the novel, there is a fictive episode that sketches a typical trait of Cao's personality. This is the slaughter of Lu Boshe's family. Lu is a sworn brother of Cao's father, and when Cao is wanted by the court, he flees from the capital and goes to Lu's home for one night. While Lu invites him to relax in the hall and goes out to buy some wine, his servant is sharpening a knife to slaughter a pig for their dinner. Cao mistakes the servant's act for treachery against him and kills all eight persons in the household, then murders Lu on the road even after he has realized his own mistake. When his companion Chen Gong says that what he has just done is greatly vicious, since he knew Lu was innocent, Cao argues that Lu would have not let them go if he had found what had happened at his home. Then, he utters the principle on which he relies to direct his behavior throughout the whole novel: "I would rather let every single person in the whole world down, than let one single person take advantage of me" (38). Pragmatically, his skeptical attitude is a cunning way to stay alive. However, for the reader, the narrator's condemnatory tone is too obvious to skip. Cao's selfishness definitely overshadows all his political and military successes.

Apparently, for the narrator, moral considerations are more important than practical considerations. When Cao Cao's son Cao Pi finally throws the last Han emperor out of the palace, the narrator quotes a poem to indicate that since Cao Pi betrayed his sovereign, he just established an example which will even be harmful to himself, as it certainly gives someone the right to do the same thing to Cao Pi's own descendants (679). Later, the Wei reign established by Cao Pi is indeed replaced by the Jin reign in the same if not worse manner. It is virtue but not power that can survive the endless course of time. This is

the lesson which the narrator consistently reminds us of with his unique arrangement of the events. C. T. Hsia observes that in creating the image of Guan Yu, one of Liu Bei's sworn brothers, Luo Guanzhong has adopted Chen Shou's view in the History that a hero is "a haughty warrior deficient in generalship." The reason Hsia offers is that when Luo was writing the novel, Guan Yu already was "an object of national veneration." Luo thus "accords him all the reverence merited by a saint" (The Classic Chinese Novel 41). The reason that the narrator makes the fictional Guan Yu a man of virtue rather than a competent general, it seems to me, lies deeper than just the passive acceptance of what values prevailed at that time. Winning or losing battles is a crucial test for a historian, but not necessarily for a novelist. In the History, it is the battle Guan Yu unduly lost to the Wu reign that initiated the decline of Liu's Shu reign. In contrast, despite his failure on the battle field, in the novel, Guan Yu wins both sides' admiration. Given the narrator's sympathy, Guan Yu's image lasts much longer than the kingdoms involved in the battle. It is the narrator's integrated perspective that endows the fictional Guan Yu with a life still present today. It is simply that the author just records Guan Yu's sagacity which is exaggerated, in order to compensate for "his [Guan Yu's] sheer ignorance of policy, his childish vanity and unbearable conceit" (Ibid.). Guan Yu offers another example of the novel's theme regarding the lasting endurance of virtue.

The narrator's perspective gives a narrative its internal structure. Although in general between Chinese novels and Western novels there are significant differences in textual structures, in both cases it is the narrator's perspective that constructs an intrinsic framework for the story's revelation.

Because of the lack of structural coincidences between Chinese novels and Western novels, some scholars claim that Chinese novels are structurally weak. Richard G. Irwin, for instance, declares that Three Kingdoms bears its "structural weakness," and that the limitations of the novel "derive from its factual basis and from a lack of selection" (5). Whether the textual structures in Chinese novels are weak or not is the issue of another argument.[53] Nevertheless, if we only shift our attention from the textual structure to the internal structure, from the selection of events and episodes to the selection of characters' personalities, it will be not so difficult to understand that Three Kingdoms in its own way has a unified structure. In order to grasp the essentials of narrative, to think of the comparative nature of narrative will be more helpful than applying a local theory to narratives that are alien to the literature in which this theory is rooted.

In their Introduction to Understanding Narrative, James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz express their concern about the "decreased differentiation between *history* and *fiction*" (3, the authors' italics). If we take Luo's Three Kingdoms and Chen's History as an example, it is reasonable to say that the distinction between history and fiction will never entirely vanish. No matter what perspective Chen chooses in selecting materials and interpreting historical development, he has to scrutinize historical facts and produce an explanation for this history. The center of his work is the factual history. In contrast, the historical world in Luo's version is presented from the narrator's perspective. He relies on the narrator as the witness who tells the history replayed in his imagination. The center of his work is the narrator's

[53] For example, As Peter Li did in his "Narrative Patterns in *San-Kuo* and *Shui-Hu*" (73-84)

perspective. The author fictionalizes historical figures and events whenever this twist can generate a narrative power to help the reader absorb the narrator's viewpoint, such as Liu Bei's sworn brotherhood with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, and Cao Cao's slaughter of Lu Bushe's family. Unlike written history where the historian maintains his presence in the disguise of an omniscient authority, in a fictional work, through fictionalization the author can disguise his or her presence behind the story and leave the narrator to stand alone on the stage.

In Three Kingdoms it is apparent that there is a connection between fictionalization and the communication of a certain perspective. Understanding this connection is crucial for understanding the development of Chinese fiction. Three Kingdoms largely has been regarded as a popular version of Chen's history. In this view, the function of fictionalization is merely to make the narration more vivid and readable. The novel thus lacks the essential quality of being a novel. It is said that the Chinese novel did not reach its maturity until *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase, 1617) or *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Chamber, 1754), as the former for the first time in the history of the Chinese novel used contemporary life for its material; and the latter, in Anthony C. Yu's words, was the first novel to achieve self-reflexitivity in the Chinese narrative tradition (15). Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) even declares that there is no place for Three Kingdoms in belles lettres (521). However, if we consider fictionalization a means to maintain and present the narrator's perspective, and the narrator's perspective the essential element of fictional narrative (even more important than the narrated content), it requires no special effort to concede that Three Kingdoms is certainly a landmark in the development of

the Chinese novel.

Fictionalization is author's creation. To the narrator it grants the coherence of narration, and enables him or her to create a world consonant with the author's world as well as the reader's world What makes fictionalization necessary is the perspective which the narrator assumes in telling the story. By being embodied in the text, the fictional world becomes a reality, and the narrator's perspective becomes a source by which the reader obtains insight into the human condition. Three Kingdoms is generally read as a history, not only because its materials are taken from Chen's History, but also because the craft of fictionalization is so skillful that one can hardly tell fiction from reality in the novel. The narrator has a definite viewpoint on the relationship between virtue and power, and this viewpoint meets readers' expectations which are rooted in a particular cultural environment. The bond between the narrator's viewpoint and the readers' expectations is so profound that readers can hardly tell the difference. Many critics blame Luo Guanzhong's novel for lacking the rigidity of actuality (實). Nevertheless, in the novel, the spirituality (神) exhibited in the narrator's perspective is actually supported by the fictivity (虛). If we agree with the majority of Chinese critics that spirituality is the essence of truthfulness (真), then, taking Three Kingdoms as an example, we may reasonably say that deciphering the narrator's perspective is certainly a reliable way to reach the intended truthfulness of a fictional narrative.

3. *Language: the Agent of Narrative Movement*

The Nature of Language and the Function of Narrative

Narrative presents itself in the form of a text. A text is an organized entity of language. Within a narrative text the language is organized in a way to present both the narrated and the narrator. There is no question that language is the vehicle which carries out a narrative intention. The question we face is rather more complicated: is language a vehicle that is inadequate in communicating the intended meaning but the only means we can possibly have in order to communicate? Or, is language a medium that not only conveys the intended meaning but also endows it with a unique power and intensity? The positive answer to the second question is the theme I intend to expound in this chapter.

The competence of language is certainly a central issue in contemporary criticism, if is not the central one. In the case we are dealing with here, there are two questions which are related to this issue. First, if the relationship between language that says things and the things which are referred to by language is the relation between the signifier and the signified, then, is language competent enough to communicate the intended content? Secondly, if language itself has its limits, is it possible that generic forms of language, like poetry and narrative, can generate a certain capacity and endow the thus-organized language with such capacity? This chapter discusses these two questions as they appear in the scope of narrative. I will also compare narratives in the language with a phonetic alphabet (English)

and narratives in the language with pictographic characters (Chinese). Let us first begin with the second question.

As we have established in the last chapter, a narrative is a cluster of discourses related by the narrator. From this statement, we may also infer that a narrative is a quoted vocalization. It is a quotation without quotation marks appearing at its very beginning and very end. The quotation marks are conceptually there but invisible. These invisible quotation marks give a narrative at least two characteristics. On the one hand, they circumscribe a semantic unit within which the intertextual relations among linguistic elements are not only hypothetical but expected. On the other hand, as James R. Hurford and Brendan Heasley remark (15), quotation marks turn a vocalization into an utterance, and an utterance is a vocalization which is articulated by a particular person and in a particular verbal manner. It has an accent that goes beyond the meaning of a mere stretch of verbal expression.

The language organized in a verbal form is always constrained by two sets of systems. Linguistically, these elements of language must be arranged in accordance with the conventional consensus, in order to render the string of words intelligible. Semantically, these language elements are constituted in such a way as to produce in the recipient's mind a coherent meaning of the referent. However, there is no guarantee of correspondence between linguistic correctness and semantic coherence. Linguistic correctness does not always generate semantic meaningfulness. Roman Jakobson warns us about taking for granted the relationship between language and its meaning. He makes a careful distinction between the meaning in dictionary, which he

calls the "lexical meaning," and the meaning rooted in the structure of wording, which he calls "grammatical meaning" (On Language 316). In his opinion, the meaning of a text goes beyond linguistic explanation. In searching for the textual meaning, Jakobson puts more and more stress on structures instead of lexical units which are organized within a certain structure. Of these structures, the most productive one is the system of oppositions, which he calls "binary oppositions" (320), for instance, the opposition between the general meaning of a word and its particular meanings in the different circumstances in which it is used (333). In the logic of Jakobson's approach, it is structure that leads one's understanding from the linguistic level to the semantic level.

Jakobson quite convincingly applies his postulate to the study of poetry. The formalized use of language, the recurrent returns, the interplay of imagery and grammar, the juxtaposition of contrasting grammatical concepts, the parallel and contrasting of syllables, and the measure of sequences, these structural elements perform their special functions in poetry. As Jakobson states, in poetry, "where the poetic function dominates over the strictly cognitive function, the latter is more or less dimmed" (Language in Literature 124). Jakobson thus declares, "many poetic features belong not only to the science of language but to the whole theory of signs, that is, to general semiotics" (63). In other words, in a literary work like a poem, one should not see language merely as a transparent vehicle of cognitive meaning. In a literary work, language upholds some of its intrinsic properties, such as sound patterns and grammatical structures. Without these properties, the intended meaning of a literary work cannot be fully conveyed.

Jakobson's thoughts on the relation of linguistics and poetics is a good

starting point for us to look into the relationship between language and narrative. However, in narrative, the function of those language properties that in themselves have no cognitive meaning is much more complicated than what we can find in poetry. Narrative has its own way of structuring itself and has to deal with another kinds of subtleties. The structure of narrative is an enabling form for the language's interplay to release its potential power. Jacques Derrida, for instance, admits that narrative provides various places and various moments which expose the veiled violence of the entire "Writing Lesson" (Of Grammatology 107), even though he has an unwavering doubt in language's communicative capability. In other words, the textual circumscription of narrative bestows on language the power to release the energy which language has stored while establishing itself as the most important tool of communication in human society.

Now, here is another question. If the form of narrative has the capacity to enhance the communicative function of language, what are the properties of narrative that give language the leverage to play the game beyond the linguistic rules? First of all, it is its structure. The structure of narrative discussed here, as defined in the last chapter, is its internal structure, i.e., the narrator's perspective, but not its formal organization like metric patterns in poetry. The narrator's perspective structures the interplay of various discourses. The textual closure of a narrative drops a line to the completion of the intended incarnation of the narrative movement. The interplay of various discourses is conducted through the narrator's perspective. The narrator's perspective embodies itself in the relationships among various discourses. The interrelated relationships provide a self-referential system for the language

involved. For instance, a word has its various lexical meanings (meanings defined in dictionary). In a narrative, it is the reader who decides what is the meaning of the word. What justifies the reader's decision is not only the single sentence in which it occurs, but also other contexts of its occurrences, the narrated characters' understanding of its meaning, and our understanding of the meanings given by the narrated characters which, in turn, is based on our understanding of the narrated characters' relationships projected through the narrator's perspective. The interplay of different versions of the perceived meaning of a word turns its lexical meaning into its semantic meaning. In doing so, this act not only defines its denotation but also enriches its connotation. The textual enclosure grants the reader the right to assume that the involved language is meant to function in this self-referential and self-defining system. To deconstruct the text means to disintegrate the system and ask the reader to understand the involved language merely on the lexical level. In a narrative, the structure itself doesn't have a cognitive meaning. It is a peculiar way of organizing language. Nevertheless, it is the system that can generate a certain kind of meaning by calling language into full play through the particular way.

It is worth noticing that emphasizing the internal structure of a narrative is not to deny the importance of its formal structure. The formal structure of a narrative may function semantically if constructed carefully. The correspondence between the arrangement of the eighteen chapters of Joyce's Ulysses and the structure of the Odyssey, even though loosely fabricated, of course gives the novel a significance other than what a linguistic analysis can offer. Aside from this kind of intended elaboration, to reinforce the meaning carried by the language involved almost always is the

goal every narrative writer endeavors to achieve when molding the cluster of discourses into a structure, no matter whether this has been done conventionally or in an avant-garde way. Some novelists like William H. Gass even suggest that language is the essence but not the medium of literature and that the structure of a narrative should function as the means to maintain the properties of language. In Gass's words, "The esthetic aim of any fiction is the creation of a verbal world" (Fiction 7), and "the syntax takes shapes simultaneously with the meanings it shapes" (Habitations 174). In his opinion, fiction is a "phnomenological model" (Interview 173), whose form helps language fulfill its potential and thereby distinguish itself from other parts of reality. The formal structure of narrative has its formative function, but it doesn't work in the same way that the formal structure of poetry does. It may include but does not depend on the direct interplay of certain formal language properties, such as metric patterns and the parallels and contrasts of grammatical sequences. Instead, a narrative's formal structure functions on the level where certain sub-structures interact with each other around the crux of the internal structure, i.e., the narrative's perspective, in which they have been organized.

In the chapter entitled "Narrative Structure" in Relating Events in Narrative: A Crosslinguistic Developmental Study, Ruth A. Berman and Dan Isaac Slobin list some structural components used by the storyteller that organize "narrative segments" or "chunks of discourse" (67). This study is based on observing a group of people, from 3-year olds to adults, who are able to tell a story. The components they mention include plot-motivation and elaboration (action-structure); temporal anchoring and twofold temporal

structure; evaluative commentary; inter-utterance connectivity; linguistic organization; sequential event-chaining and causal chaining; backgrounding; stereotypical construe of narrative conventions, and thematic thread, etc.. They describe two kinds of knowledge: first, knowledge of a range of grammatical forms and lexical items for describing individual events; second, "knowledge of narrative structure and of how to recruit linguistic forms for elaborating on events and the relations between them." The latter "emerges rather later" (84). We may therefore infer that these narrative structuring components, or sub-structures, are associated with linguistic forms but appeal to a different level of comprehension. Likewise, the integration of these sub-structures depends on appealing to an even deeper level but still relying on linguistic elements. In turn, in executing this function, the linguistic elements acquire a meaning which can only be obtained within this structure.

We may take personal pronouns as an example. Linguistically speaking, a personal pronoun substitutes for a person's name. In a fictional narrative, this relationship occurs as a reversal. The character's name substitutes for the pronoun. The pronoun itself is the name of the agent of action. In other words, the character's name is the the signifier and the personal pronoun is the signified. Being an agent of action in the linguistic articulation of narrative, it little matters that the major character in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness is called Marlow or "he" (or "he [1]," to distinguish him from other "he"s). However, it does matter whether it is a "he" or an "I," since the pronoun signifies his relationship to the narrator. In other words, as an linguistic constituent, in naming a character, the function of the pronoun precedes the function of the proper name. The pronoun signals a particular human being and functions as an interlocutor of discourse; whereas the

proper name is mainly a convenient substitute, unless the author intends to associate it with some special implication. In a narrative, a pronoun is not a general, non-identified and replaceable substitute, but an active entity that acquires its identification through the acts it has been performing. The given name of a character is the substitute for the pronoun. Thus, the pronoun and the given name of the character (as an arbitrary substitute of the pronoun) fall under the spell of a centripetal power. This requires the reader to see the pronoun or the name in the context of the narrative as well as the context of its lexical meaning and grammatical structure.

We may randomly take prepositions and adverbs as another example. When the need emerges, the complexity emanating from the narrator-centered structure generically requires prepositions and adverbs to perform functions which they would not have performed if merely confined as grammatical structures. For instance, the structure of time is always complicated in a narrative. There are the time when the narrator is narrating the story, and the time when the narrated events were happening; the chronological sequence of the happenings, and the time sequence contrived by the narrator in telling the story (for instance, we may know the end of an episode prior to its narrated beginning); the temporal structure of a character's thinking, and the temporal structure of the things occurring in his or her mind, etc. In order to integrate these different temporal structures smoothly into a multidimensional unit (in addition to some other linguistic and textual devices, such as tenses of verbs and italicization), in some particular positions, those prepositions and adverbs related to expressing the state of time carry out a twofold function. Not only can they fit into their slots as

grammatical structures regulating the temporal sequences of single happenings, but they also may function as axes connecting different temporal structures. These prepositions and adverbs act as paths through which the reader may not only travel in a time dimension but also pass through different time zones.

To know the language used in a narrative is not the same as learning the language in general. For instance, the acquisition of the meaning of a word, in the general case, involves learning its plausible variants in all possible circumstances. In the case of narrative, the acquisition involves grasping the word's meaning in the given stretch of verbal expression circumscribed by the narrative's invisible quotation marks. As a matter of fact, the rhetoric of narrative is meant to create some subtleties as the meanings of certain words which one can hardly find in dictionaries. The textual closure itself is a sign, indicating the circumstances necessary for understanding of word. Noam Chomsky points out that in the acquisition of language, certain language patterns, such as the general principle of syntactic-semantic interaction and the "trace theory of movement rules,"[53] may enable people to discern the inadequacy in language communication, even though they might live most or all of their lives without even being exposed to the relevant evidence (69-74). Structural patterns of narrative also have a generating power but function in a different way. The lexical meaning of a word acquired by the reader when he or she starts to read a narrative is only a hypothesis. It arouses an expectation to see the word used with the same

[53] In Chomsky's own words, it is the theory that "requires that when a phrase is moved by transformation it leaves behind a phonetically null but syntactically real element 'trace' that functions semantically as a kind of bound variable" (74).

denotation, but the expectation may fairly be challenged by its next occurrence. The structure of a narrative promises to provide both the mechanisms and the margins for the extent of a word's meaning. For instance, in Yasunari Kawabata's Snow Country the male protagonist Shimamura feels the most attractive quality of Komako, the female protagonist, is her cleanliness. At the narrative's outset, cleanliness points to the freshness of her appearance and to the delicacy of her manner. It is then related to unsoiled naturalness in contrast to the corruption of the urban life; the whiteness symbolized by the snow; the inadequate approximation to the purity of beauty; the access to the transparency of nothingness; and the thinness of the veil that covers the redness of the passion. The meaning of the word changes with each of its occurrences, until the end of the narrative eliminates any other possible change in its meaning.

The formation of narrative organizes language within a structure. This structure engenders a meaning that would otherwise not be there. Within this structure, while carrying out their referential functions, words, phrases, sentences and discourses have their intra-linguistic relationships with each other, just like cells in an organism that connect with each other in an organic way while reacting to the environmental stimuli. Therefore, we should respect the integrality of a narrative even if we intend to analyze it semantically. Paul Ricoeur, in both The Rule of Metaphor and Time and Narrative, proposes to read literary works on a semantic instead of rhetorical level (Metaphor 3-4). In other words, he urges us to take sentence instead of word as the unit of meaning. For it is with sentence (a semantic unit) that "language is oriented beyond itself." Language then starts to carry out its

referential function (Time and Narrative 1:78). And, "reference is the mark of the self-transcendence of language" (Metaphor 74). However, there is another problem. In literature, language is not supposed to be a mere vehicle whose function is solely to carry out the referential meaning. As we have observed in the case of poetry, the transparency of language is not a literary merit. As Ricoeur himself maintains, in a narrative, the sequence of the actions of sentences within the conceptual network of the actions is an essential element for creating the "composing of modes of discourse worthy of being called narratives" (Time and Narrative 1: 56). The linguistic connections among sentences and discourses construct a bond that connects the referential meanings signaled by each of them. Narrative itself is a semantic unit. The textual relationships among sentences and discourses on the surface of a narrative imprint a network of paths, leading the reader's thinking in a multidimensional way. We cannot say we understand the beginning of a narrative until we have reached its end; likewise, we cannot say we understand the end of a narrative unless we refer back to its beginning. The conceptual network in a narrative is regulated by the narrator's perspective; the narrator's perspective is incarnated by the textual arrangement of discourses. The referential function of language is both constrained and enhanced by this textual arrangement. Language as used in a narrative both is and is not language in general.

Now, let us turn to the issue of the accent which a narrative gains by being a quoted utterance. In some sense, the accent of a narrative is the intonation of an utterance. In Ludwig Wittgenstein"s Philosophical Investigation, when discussing proposed solutions to the uncertainty of the meaning of language, he suggests that a word or a sentence always carries an

accompanying atmosphere with it. This atmosphere is the special circumstance in which the word or the sentence is actually used. It makes the word or sentence meaningful (48). This accompanying atmosphere involves a mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener, like that which occurs between them in communicating the sentence "This is here." Intonation is a manner of utterance based on the application of the mutual understanding thus defined. It utilizes those otherwise meaningless things, such as the modulation of voice and the different intonational relationships between stem and ending, as the elements of meaning in language.

At the heart of this mutual understanding is the established relationship between the participants. An essential part of this relationship is identifying the utterance's speaker. This is also a step leading to the comprehension of language from the linguistic level to the semantic level. On the one hand, to attach an utterance to a particular person is a further move in articulating the meaning of a verbal expression. As Zellig Harris observes in A Theory of Language and Information, "meaning is specified not by a word but by a word with its choice of operator or argument (usually its immediate ones)" (331). On the other hand, to personalize the utterance is to acknowledge the personal reactions that accompany the utterance, such as the melody of the emotional movement, the stress on particular morphemes, the rhythm of the controlled breath in uttering the expression, and some other elements that affect the successive levels of pitch extending over the utterance, just as the elements that constitute the manner or style of musical tones. These personal elements are intrinsically associated with the articulating the meaning of an utterance.

Regarding the matter of intonation, one may say that as a unique type of

utterance, narrative has two characteristics. First, narrative is a multiple version of utterances. Its components themselves are utterances. The intonation pattern of a narrative is still a pattern of pitch variation, but the units that convey the high and low degrees of the narrative voice and exhibit the exactitude of pitch and the modulation of intensity, are no longer phonemes or morphemes. Instead, they are the divisions that conclude certain aspects of a narrative and comprise its entire melody. For instance, instead of using a question mark and a particular grammatical structure in a sentence-utterance, in a narrative-utterance the narrator may finish the story with a suspended ending in order to convey the questioning tone. Likewise, the fabrication of plot may correspond to the rise and fall of the pitch in an utterance, and the projection of the narrator's attitude toward narrated characters and episodes may function as a modulation of the narration's accent.

In uttering a sentence like "you've already done your homework," different intonations may render different implications to the same words organized by the same grammatical structure. Likewise; different intonations in a narrative may evoke different perceptions of the narration. It may work both in harmonious and ironical ways. However, unlike the intonation of a sentence, the intonation of a narrative does not consist of the rise and fall of sounds; rather, it substantiates itself in the modulation of the mood created by the narrative itself. For instance, in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49, the narrator counters the reader's expectations of the significance of the narrated events, a climax-centered plot and the time-sequence framework, by repeatedly striking notes that impress the reader with the same absurd frivolity and by minimizing the regulating function of the time sequence.

Oedipa's role as the executor of Inverarity's will, her relationships with her husband and everyone she meets, the underground postal system, and the auction of the stamp collection, the absurdity and triviality of all of them keep producing a high-pitched monotone, and create a labyrinth for a reader who expects to perceive meaningfulness and rhythmical movements. In contrast to this high-pitched monotone, there is a flatness that lacks the expected intensity in the framework of the narrated time. In this narrative one can hardly find a dramatization in accordance with a time sequence. Everything seemingly has sequential relationships to the previous events but nothing actually has any significant result. Everything is floating in a flat time zone, including those historical events introduced by the play. The climax that presumably would happen in the lot never actually occurs. No matter how long Oedipa is away from her home, whenever she gets back, nothing has really changed. Things keep going on in the same way no matter if the time is before or after Inverarity's death. The Tristero's Empire still controls the mysterious and powerful underground network no matter if it is the nineteenth or twentieth century. By searching for the network Oedipa arbitrarily goes into and out of different historical times without any awkwardness. For the reader the intonation of the narrative constitutes the significance one cannot otherwise find in the narrated events. On the one hand, the high-pitched monotone of the plot's absurdity and triviality helps shift our eyes from the represented events to the author's mental framework, through which the fragmentary events are organized for a show, in order to grasp the vitality of the narrative. On the other hand, the impression of the flatness related to the narrated time signals a violation of the conventional

storytelling structure, and leads us to the realization that in its depth, the time sequence has already yielded its regulating role to Pynchon's perceptual association of these events and episodes. In other words, the organic structure of the events as actually taking place is no longer being imitated. Without appreciating its intonation, one can hardly grasp the essence of the narrative in The Crying of Lot 49.

The second characteristic of narrative as an utterance is that the speaker's identity is contained in the utterance itself. Perceiving the intonation in a narrative derives from apprehending the narrator's standing; this apprehension, in turn, is modeled on the reading of the narrative. Knowing the identity of the speaker is of course a big help in discerning the intonation of an utterance. For an utterance like "Jack saw a wolf this morning," if the speaker is variously identified as his mother who has never seen a wolf in her whole life, a hunter who is searching for the trace of a pack of wolves, a neighbor whose baby has been missing for two days, a classmate who is dreaming of risky adventures, or a reporter who is telling the story matter-of-factly, the intonation of the same sentence in each case is distinctive. In a narrative, we know the narrator only through reading the narrative. More often than not, even at the end, the narrator does not explicitly tell the reader what is his or her calculated position in relating the story. The accent of the narrative is mingled with the unfolding of the narration. At each step, the unfolding of the narration also reveals the narrator's identity to a critical reader. The thus-perceived accent in turn enriches the reader's understanding of the narration. And the reader's perception of the narrative accent, understanding of the narration, and hypothesis about the narrator's identity are subject to change when the

assumption of these relationships is tested by the advance of the narrative. In some sense, perceiving the intonation of a narrative in relation to the narrator is a game of sensitivity and wit.

For instance, in Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle," when the narrator first mentions that Marcher senses the mysterious link between May and himself, the narrative tone while telling of his passionate attachment is heightened with affirmation. Later, when the narration reveals that Marcher lacks the courage to conceive love straightforwardly, and that his self-withdrawal renders life as dingy and mysterious as a "jungle," the narrative tone in relating his cowardice is intensified by the inquiry into his personality. Then, when the narration deals with the prolonged paradox between the pretended indifference and the developed feeling of tenderness, altruism, anxiety and mutual care, the narrative proceeds with a level tone that reflects the narrator's puzzlement. Finally, the narration tells us that with the aid of the hunger and sorrow for his irrevocable loss, Marcher eventually realizes that the beast he had been afraid of was actually a psychological knot of his own unstable sensitivity and his ambivalent attitude toward truth and reality. At this point, the image of the beast strikes a note in the reader's mind that relates the thematic melody of the narrative. It reveals a truth which the narrator tries to tell us: the consciousness one holds as the reflection of life is interwoven into one's life itself, along with material events. The narrative intonation is inflected by the intensity of the narrator's attitude, whereas the narrator's attitude is reflected in the accented narration. The narrator of narrative doesn't have a fixed identity with clear-cut edges. Each reader may form his or her own apprehension of the narrator's identity.

However, conceptually, a narrative always contains its own narrator. As Homer says at the very beginning of The Odyssey, "Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story ... " (1). There is always a "me" in a narrative. The configuration of the narrator is essential for the reader's conception of the intonation of the narrative.

At the end of The Order of Things, Foucault maintains that literature is a fundamental form of language, and that language in literature is neither a sign nor a proof, but a phenomenon in and of itself, "whose necessity has its roots in a vast configuration in which the whole structure of our thought and our knowledge is traced" (383). Literature is "language experienced and traversed as language, in the play of its possibilities extended to their furthest point" (Ibid.) In the case of the genre of narrative, as we have examined so far, the literary structure indeed enables language to activate its potentialities to an extent beyond the limits of ordinary verbal communication.

Now we need to go back to the first question raised at the beginning of this chapter: whether language as the signifier is capable of conveying the intended content or meaning as the signified. Or, to put it in a more challenging way, as Derrida does, the question we should ask is whether or not language is an adequate signifier or even if it is a signifier at all. The inquiry into the nature of language is directly related to the nature of narrative. Since Derrida is the central figure in the controversy over the nature of language among contemporary critics, I will comment on Of Grammatology's contribution to the subject.

In Derrida's opinion, language as the signifier is congenitally crippled. The interplay among its own different layers paralyzes its ability to signify. When we contact a signified thing, we certainly receive an impression of the

thing, but there is nothing we can utilize to maintain the impression as it is, so it passes away immediately, and what is left is what Derrida calls the "trace." What the trace registers is the fact that this impression is different from all other impressions. Therefore, in Derrida's words, "the (pure) trace is difference" (62). Since the trace imprints itself upon our perceptions in a way analogous to the way in which writing performs its function, the first layer of language, according to Derrida, is writing but not speaking. Language is therefore first writing (37). In this sense, "writing was, by its situation, destined to signify the most formidable difference" (56). Trace is the sign that does not depend on any sensible plentitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic, "it does not exist." However, "its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls sign (signified/signified, content/expression, etc.)" (62). It marks differences, and the whole language system is based on the correspondence between the differences marked by the trace and the differences of phonetic symbols. In this sense, speaking itself has already been signifier when it is signified by writing. Also in this sense, "difference is therefore the formation of form" (63).

Most language theories consider the bond between the signifying sound and the signified thing arbitrary. Their connection is supposedly established by social conventions. Derrida is hesitant in defining the nature of the relationship between the trace and the phonetic symbol. He does acknowledge the role social conventions have played in establishing the connection between the sound and the meaning, saying that spoken language is the first convention (11). In its positive sense, he describes the ground for the conventional symbolization as "totality" (9); in its negative sense, he calls it

"an historico-metaphysical epoch" (4). The object of his proposed deconstruction is the "closure" of this epoch or totality. However, he intends to locate this institutionalized arbitrariness in the relationship between speaking and writing, rather than that between the trace and phonetic sounds. As a matter of fact, Derrida tries hard to point out that there is a profound connection between this first pair of signifier and signified. He relates it to the "pure intelligibility," the "absolute logos." (13). Here he finds a kinship between semantics and theology. He asserts, "The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth" (14), but hastily adds that what he means by "theological" is "a determined moment in the total movement of the trace" (47). The connection between the sign and the trace (the so-called thing) is not, like some linguists postulate, intuitive consciousness, but "the essential possibility of nonintuition" (40). Derrida even tries to find some natural bond for this connection in the human passion that exceeds physical need and awakens imagination (217).

Since the trace is an indication of the "disappearance of origin" (61), and since the relation between the so-called thing as the signified and the phonetic symbol as the signifier is essentially arbitrary, in its first step (speech), language has already betrayed its destined designation if its function is merely to signify. "The death of speech is therefore the horizon and origin of language" (315). Nevertheless, things get even worse when we come to the second layer of language, the layer between speech and writing. If there is still some divine or natural bond one may discern in the relationship between the signifying sound and the signified thing (the trace), then writing (in its ordinary sense) is simply an artificial construction to record speech even

more arbitrarily. We need writing to keep and recapture speech "since speech denies itself as it gives itself" (142), However, "what writing itself, in its nonphonetic moment, betrays, is life" (25). It is not natural. "It diverts the immediate presence of thought to speech into representation and the imagination" (144). Therefore, "writing is the eve of speech" (238). Indeed, the relationship between a sound and its written sign is arbitrary. For instance, no one can explain why there are only 26 letters representing 36 sounds in English (Bolton 5). Writing is a supplementary system and structure. It has developed in such a self-referential and self-centered way that in a text, the presented form of writing, one can hardly step out of the confines of this artificial system to back to the voice, even though the voice itself is only a sign that reminds us of the disappearance of the presence of the meant-to-be-signified object. In this sense, as the "axial proposition" in Of Grammatology, Derrida declares "there is nothing outside the text" (163). In other words, if one limits oneself to the text, all one can find is the shell of the language system thus conceived. Unless one deconstructs the language system that consists of the enclosure of the "historico-metaphysical epoch," there is no way to gain access to the origin of the signified.

In Of Grammatology one may discern two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, Derrida puts stress on the lost natural bond between language as the signifier and things as the signified. His critique of the language system in the West is built on the logic that, unlike pictographic language, the language of phonetic alphabet does not imitate any part of the signified thing. There is no resemblance between the referential and the referent. What language registers are the existence and paths of perceptual difference. In the synchronic structure and systematic principle of phonetic language, there

is no relationship of natural representation (45). Derrida grants literature some leeway in this matter, but attributes the literary attainment of representation to the "play of form," that is the element based on "the purely graphic stratum" (59). The absence of naturalness in language subverts its representational function. It is one of the major reasons that Derrida demands a re-examination of Western civilization. Derrida maintains "language is not an element but the element of culture" (223). The civilization he urges us to re-examine is built on both language and the false belief that language as the signifier is capable of representing things as the signified.

Yet, in contrast with the stressed naturalness, another focus of Of Grammatology is the undetailed concept of "totality." As invented by Derrida, the concept of totality is to restrain the arbitrariness of language, and to explain the success of the language system in spite of its lack of a natural bond with hypothetically represented things. Totality is what makes language (writing) possible in the first place (9). It is the profound and implicit pretext of all texts. Totality itself is rooted in the history of metaphysics (13). It is the "essential possibility of nonintuition" (40), invading the natural and intuitive relationship between voice and breath (17). It is "unmotivated institutions" (44). Totality makes the arbitrary sound intelligible and establishes the relationship between the difference of the phonetic symbol and the difference of the trace. However, totality as an institution has its own playing rules, and these rules do not have any intrinsic relationship either to the uttered sound or to the represented world. In order to understand the world signified by language, one must first master the rules of totality. Eventually, in the process of understanding the world through language, what one obtains is a stronger

grasp of the rules of totality. This is why Derrida asserts that, "there is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language" (7); and that "the person writing is inscribed in a determined textual system" (160). It is also why he postulates that, "the history of the alphabet is accepted only after recognizing the multiplicity of the *systems* of script and after assigning a history to them, whether or not one is in the position to determine it scientifically" (76, author's italic).

Under other circumstances, these two focuses may not be in conflict. The irreconcilability of the imitative relationship between things and language results in intellectual creativity for cognitive and communicative purposes. And, instead of a single isolated case, if we talk in large terms about "totality," this institutionalized intelligibility could bring the relationship between the human society and the natural world to a level which the postulates of natural imitation cannot explain adequately. In Of Grammatology, what makes these two emphases contradictory is Derrida's conclusion about deconstruction. In Derrida's opinion, in using language, we are relying on the instituted world whose rules are essentially different from the rules of the natural world we are dealing with, so unless we deconstruct this closure which conceals the origin (93) and covers the "historico-metaphysical epoch" (4), there is no way to penetrate the substitute system and get back to the natural origin. Thus, this claim of the original naturalness is the motive and rationale for the postulate of deconstruction. This is the first emphasis of his treatise. However, on the other hand, since the direct imitation of things by language is virtually impossible, deconstruction, or de-sedimentation, as he calls it (10), can move no further than the brink between the natural world and the

instituted world: the trace and the difference. Derrida tries to situate these two concepts within a territory between the natural world and the instituted world. In his words, the trace "must be thought before the opposition of nature and culture, animality and humanity" (70), and "there is no language before differences of locale" (251). However, since the trace and difference have no impact on us at all unless integrated into an institutional system (a culture), Derrida devotes the larger portion of his work (part II) to discuss how writing itself departs from nature and turns into the essential element of culture; in other words, how the supposed-to-be-deconstructed object has constructed itself into totality. This is the second emphasis of his treatise. In Of Grammatology, nature is the initial reason for deconstructing culture but turns out to initiate a detailed discussion of culture; culture is designed to supplement nature but cannot be attached to nature. The contradiction between his two focuses makes Derrida declare that his purpose is only to designate the impossibility of language in formulating the movement of supplementarity within the classical logos (314). He maintains that the difference between his designation of impossibility and the language of metaphysics is merely a hairsbreadth. "For the rest, it must borrow its resources from the logic it deconstructs. And by doing so, find its every foothold there" (Ibid.). Now, to borrow some resources from both the logic Derrida attacks and the logic he proposes, what kind of step can we take in order to surmount this contradiction?

It seems to me that to solve this dilemma, the crucial question we should ask is whether or not language should be considered as representing things in a natural way, as a realistic painting imitates the portrayed object. To put it in

another way, it is the question of whether the naturalness of language is a quality to which we should adhere. The language Derrida refers to is actually the sound and meaning of the word, which is mainly related to phonetics, phonology and morphology. As linguistic research has shown, the set of rules that makes the sequence of the discrete sounds intelligible and meaningful is indeed acquired through socially-shared unconscious knowledge rather than naturally-regulated intuition (Halle 237). For instance, the speaker's intuitive judgements are concerned with the acceptability of grammatical structures (Graddol et al. 17). The mark of the social convention that regulates the arbitrariness between the sound and the word is also imprinted on the lack of correspondence between spelling forms and phonemes, as occurs frequently in English (Balmuth 30). The lack of the natural bond between language as the signifier and the things which are the signified appears not only in phonology. This also occurs in the structure of language. As Martinich observes, there is a long philosophical tradition which assumes that the basic structure of language and the basic structure of reality are the same, but this tradition has now been seriously challenged (187). If violating the directness (naturalness) of the relationship between language and referred things is itself a natural phenomenon, should we still stick with the tradition that insists on seeing language as the imitative representative of the referred thing?

In the first place, unlike other human sounds such as a laugh of joy or a cry of pain, the sounds uttered as speech are meant to be a means of communication. Although speech is nondirectional (anyone within hearing distance can pick it up), when the speaker utters discrete sounds to signify a objective thing or a subjective mood, he or she addresses a particular audience. What determines the nature of the sound is not only the relationship between

language as the signifier and the thing as the signified, but also the relationship between the speaker as the addresser and the listener as the addressee. Thus, at the outset, the naturalness of imitation symbolized by pictographic writing (as Derrida suggests) is only part of the truth concerning the nature of language. As a matter of fact, as we can see in the case of the Chinese language, pictographic language must also register the spontaneous sound along with the pictorial symbol. It is hard to imagine that primitive people communicated with pictorial symbols without uttering discrete sounds, sounds that were arbitrary both to the object and the pictorial symbol. It is also hard to imagine that illiterate people can communicate with each other without a phonetic system that can work independently from pictographic writing. It may not be too wild a guess that, even though there was no visual similarity between the phonetic symbol and the signified object, when people started to establish a connection between the sound and the object, the consensus of a certain community might have had something to do with the similarity in the way of making the sound, as the people who were affected by an emotional reaction while perceiving this particular object lived in the same geographic area, in the same climate, and had the same nourishment. Unlike relying on visual images, using sound is the most economical way to liberate people from the direct contact with the object in order to communicate more freely and effectively.

The concept of totality in the sense Derrida defines it is comprised of at least two systems, both culturally manmade. The first one includes the set of rules concerning phonemes, morphemes, syntaxes, and other language components, the rules that are established by convention and pave the ground

for understanding sentences yet to be created. These rules relate to how language works, but not to what knowledge language carries. In some sense, one may indeed call these rules the pretext of any text. For without them, not a single text would be intelligible to any one but the writer. These rules are alien to the natural world. However, if we consider the twofold communicative function of language, instead of seeing it merely as representing a natural thing, the convention that regulates the arbitrariness of language actually becomes an embodiment of the relationship between the addresser and the addressee, and thus is a part of the nature of language. To deconstruct this social agreement is therefore to deconstruct language itself.

On the other hand, language itself is an institution. The set of linguistic rules is the path leading us into language itself. The language we encounter in reality is never a theoretical abstraction. It carries the sediment of human experience and intelligibility over generations. Language is the strongest social bond. Even living in isolation, one can never totally cut oneself off from societal relationships if he or she has already acquired language ability, since language itself contains these relationships. As soon as language is used either in thinking or in spoken monologue, one has already merged into the community where the language is used. There can never be a pure one-to-one relationship between a perceiving subject and a perceived object. As soon as the subject uses language to register and describe the perception, either publicly or privately, he or she has already started to negotiate his or her experience with other people's experiences as those reside in language. In this sense, as Harvey Daniels observes, "we are conditioned to some degree by the language we speak, and our language does teach us habitual ways of looking at the world" (32). Mastering language is a way of gaining access to

the depth of human intelligibility.

Karl Popper postulates that between the world of physical objects and the world of consciousness, there is the world comprised of "objective contents of thought," which he calls "world 3" (58). He itemizes the contents of this world, listing them as problems, conjectures, theories arguments, journals, and books. These entities are, he points out, a "symbolic or linguistic means to evoke in others similar mental states or behavioural dispositions to act" (59). The reason that this particular world can be considered to have an independent existence is that it materializes through language. Although Popper only mentions books and libraries, obviously it is language that transforms knowledge or thought in the subjective sense into knowledge or thought in the objective sense, i.e., "knowledge without a knowing subject" (60). Whether we should follow Popper in calling this language presence "world 3" is not the issue here. What Popper's theory indeed elucidates is that language as the embodiment of experience and intelligibility does not necessarily rely on either the natural (physical) world or the mental (conscious) state for its autonomy (67). It is rather the medium between these two. This postulate is contrary to Derrida's postulate of totality, since it is due to the lack of its autonomy that Derrida advocates deconstructing language in order to reveal its hidden totality. This is also a postulate we are going to rely on to discuss the function of narrative as a language entity.

Derrida's concept of the "trace" gives us a clue now to explore the relationship between language as the signifier and things as the signified. Since, as Derrida observes, language cannot register the thing itself but merely the impression of the thing that disappears at the same time it occurs,

the thing we call language is actually a register of our understanding of things, but not a representative of things. In order to deal with the world we contact, it is neither possible nor desirable to record every aspect of every thing in language. Even a mirror can only provide a two-dimensional image of the reflected object. Along with perception, language always conveys the perspective from which the thing has been perceived. If we look at the ancient Egyptian word and the ancient Chinese word that both signify the same natural object like the sun, it is not difficult to perceive the difference between them and understand that even in pictographic language, language is still not meant to be an entirely objective representative of things. In the sciences, scientists manipulate language through the fabrication of definitions and modifications to increase the approximation between our understanding of things and the things themselves. Even in this case, whenever language is used in a statement as simple as "this stone weights five pounds," the speaker has already framed the object with a manmade measure. In literature, every work is prompted to enrich our understanding of the world by an innovative use of language. The new way of understanding embodies itself in the form of a text. Therefore, it is questionable to maintain that there is the trace which exists prior to the opposition of nature and culture, as Derrida suggests (70). It would be more reasonable to assume that at the very first moment of creating language, the trace itself is already a mixture of the perception of the thing and the subjective reaction to this perception. Moreover, if language itself is an institution within which we exchange our understandings of the world, then, since language sustains a particular way of perceiving the world, the question itself of whether language as the signifier is capable of representing the world as the signified

is not a valid one. Language, as an integration of an understanding of the world and the world itself, instead of being a system of substitution and a structure of supplementarity, has its own reason for existence. Based on this fact, Heidegger even gives a name to the phenomenon that language speaks solely with itself alone. He calls it "the mystery of language" (111).

Wilhelm von Humboldt tells us that we must look upon language not as "a dead product" but as "a producing," and that language by its real nature is "an enduring thing, and at every moment a transitory one" (48-49). Language is not only an institution, but an ever-changing and ever-growing institution. After Cervantes, the term "chivalrous spirit" definitely implies something that was not there before; after T. S. Elliot, the phrase "the waste land" also has a special ring to it. The development of language, in reality, does not appear in the form of language per se, but materializes in language's various constituent genres, such as monologue, dialogue, poetry, essay, drama, narrative, etc.. Each genre has its peculiar way of carrying out its communicative function as well as of absorbing new perceptions, sensitivities and intelligibilities into the body of language. Of these genres, narrative holds a unique position. As a generic mixture, it spans the speaker, the subject matter and the listener, and makes the bridge it constructs a unique structural feature.

Having established narrative's relationship to language in general, let us go back to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter: whether we should consider language to be an inadequate vehicle which we have no choice but rely on, or the medium that endows narrative with its unique power and intensity. Now, according to the logic I have been arguing here, the latter is apparently the answer.

A narrative is a story. However, a narrative is not merely a listing of events in some chronological order; it is also, more importantly, a presentation of how to conceive the events in a way that the incentive we have had thus far will connect our own experience to the experience delineated in the story. We read the story of The Wizard of Oz to children, obviously not merely for the purpose of letting them know a fictive adventure of a girl named Dorothy who with the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion journeys on the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City. In this sense, language as a descriptive tool may not give us the detailed picture of what is happening as we might see it with our eyes. But, as a communicative means, even a very simple piece of language expression, such as the "Sir" attached to the name of the character William Walter Elliot in the beginning of Jane Austen's Persuasion, will associate our understanding with some institutional knowledge, such as the significance of rank in this particular society at this particular historical moment, and with our personal feeling to the social hierarchy.

If the conclusion we have reached about the nature of language is valid, then, as a constituent form of language, narrative does not merely function as a representation of episodes and events, but as a medium to invoke a communication between the utterer and the listener in its association with the institutional knowledge. If we adopt an analogy from what J. L. Austin defines in his speech act theory (105), we may call a narrative a performance instead of a representation. What makes narrative a unique performance is that it carries the performer (narrator) within itself. In the rhetoric of narrative, the author transforms his or her speech into the utterance of his or her creation: the narrator. There is certainly a relationship between the author as the speaker and the narrative as the speech. Nevertheless, before we trace

this relationship, we need first to elucidate the relationship between the narrator as the utterer and the narration as the performative utterance. What prevents this seemingly mutual-defining relationship from being a paradox is language's capability of connecting a particular entity to a larger expanse of intelligibility created by the whole body of language. It provides the reader with a context to examine the relationship between the narrator and the narration in terms beyond the limits set up by the narrator.

In the language world referred by Popper's theory as "world 3," a narrative is a concrete entity. No matter if it be a rock or a jewel, it has an objective existence. If we may theoretically extract it out of its language embodiment, probably we would conceive it as a movement simultaneously heading to multiple directions and constrained by the center formed by the narrator. It moves to its author's intention, its reader's interpretation, its referred reality, its other ways of understanding, its possible slot in the integration of the intellectual world, its connections to both predecessors and successors, and its relationship to other narratives, etc. Language is the agent that substantiates a narrative intention. It is also the material that gives a narrative movement its physical form. In this sense, we have enough reason to see language as the essence of narrative.

The Objectivity of Language and the Diversity of Voices: William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!

In a narrative, the objectivity of language forms the infrastructure on which the diversity of voices is founded.

A narrative is an entity of language. While it is the embodiment of the author's imagination, it is presented as the narrator's utterance. This fact poses a question for stylistic analysis of fiction. According to Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short's Style in Fiction, stylistic analysis has several emphases related to the style of fiction. One of these is a stress on the particular way language is used, which is mainly attributed to a particular author (38). One of the other characteristics of stylistic study is a focus on "forms of language which can be seen as equivalent in terms of the 'referential reality' they describe" (39), in other words, the stylistic elements that beyond language engender these implications. Conceptually, the employment of these forms is under the control of the person who actually delivers the utterance--in other words, the narrator. Michael Toolan, in The Stylistics of Fiction, defines the goal of stylistics as "the provision of specific textual evidence charting the shifting narratorial alignments with the chief characters, more subtle and fluid than canonical free indirect discourse" (27). Thus, it aims at the language connected to the major characters, in other words, the language uttered by different voices. What orchestrates diverse discourses into a totality is "a public discourse of widely understood vocabulary, a language expressing modes and frameworks which are applicable to a range of texts (not just those deemed literary)." This public discourse provides the "objectivity" for reading a text (42).

When applied to narrative, the objectivity of language has at least two meanings. On the one hand, language objectifies the author's intentions and presents to the reader conceivable object of appreciation that in form assumes the narrator's utterance. To say that language objectifies narrative not only

means that it gives the narrative a material existence, but also implies that it localizes the narrative within our understanding of the world as bolstered by language. For instance, the phrase Faulkner uses as the title Absalom, Absalom! is an unmistakable allusion to the Old Testament story of David, his son Absalom, and the killing between two brothers. The language objectification of narrative is not only its acquisition of a material form, but its integration into language itself.

On the other hand, the objectivity of language, as Toolan infers, entails the conventions that guarantee communication. Language is an ever-changing institution. However, there is always a consensus among speakers in a particular community at a particular time, which regulates the changes and variations into a communicable way. In the case of English, despite the vocabulary variation in Old English literary prose (Godden 515), despite the lack of syntactical accord or agreement in Middle English (Fischer 364), despite the dramatical change in the English language with the Norman invasion in 1066 (Millward 8), despite the addition of slang such as Walter Winchell's "Slanguage" in the 20s that put his gossip column ahead of the cultural curve (Gabler 71), the English language never fails to function as "a systematic and conventional means of human communication by way of vocal sounds" (Maillward 1). Language not only records the representation of the thing but also registers human understanding of the thing. Speakers always confirm to certain rules concerning aspects of language, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon and semantics, to keep the channel of communication open.

As an entity of language, narrative submits itself to various kinds of stylistic analyses. However, by adopting the form of narrative as a mode of

communication, the author distances himself or herself from the verbal expression by translating it into the narrator's utterance; hence, the stylistic study of narrative should be much more complex than the stylistic study of poetry. As we have observed in James's The Portrait of a Lady, the narrator does not always express his or her perspective explicitly, but displays it by negotiating with different characters' viewpoints. Since narrative is a cluster of diverse discourses, in some novels, either the controlling role played by the narrator appears entirely invisible, or the narrator turns out to be one of the characters and yields a large part of the narrating role to other characters. William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! is a case in point. To put it in the extreme, as John Matthew does in The Play of Faulkner's Language, one may indeed argue that in narrative the freely inaugurated motions of language itself produce ideas, sense, meanings and personalities (9). This section is intended to use Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! to discuss how the genre of narrative allows a play of diverse voices to substantiate an otherwise-undeveloped aspect of language.

The choice of Faulkner for discussing voices in narrative is not random. "I listen to the voices," Faulkner once said, "and when I put down what the voices say, it's right" (Cowley 114). These voices certainly remain distinguishable. They may, as Matthews observes, indicate the voices of the southerners who attempt to draw a indictment of contemporary life or escape from it into a make-believe region (8); or, as Stephen Ross defines in Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice, these voices imply the constituent parts of the very writer's voice, like the phenomenal voice, mimetic voice, psychic voice and oratorical voice (12-17). In this discussion, the concept of voices is used in the

sense that they are the patterns in which the utterances of the author, the narrator and the characters are delivered. Or, as Gerard Genette describes it, this the concept illustrates the relationship between the speaking subject and the speech (212-213).

Compared to the terminology of Chinese literary criticism, the concept of "voice" is characteristically related to a literature that has come out of an alphabetic language. Voice is essentially a phonological term. The Chinese counterpart of the term of "voice" used in this sense is angle (角度). In the Chinese phraseology, a narrative voice is a narrative angle, which is a term closely related to visuality. In the English language, the practice of the narrative voice in literature is built on the conviction that the way of saying things is able to change the meaning of what has been said. This conviction is cultivated in the experience of vocal communication.

Absalom, Absalom! is one of the finest presentations of narrative. It shows that as a special genre of verbal expression, narrative is capable of convoluting voices to enunciate an understanding of things, which cannot be communicated so effectively in other forms of language. ' The novel is narrated through different voices, such as that of Rosa, Quentin, Quentin's father, General Compson and Shreve. They speak the same language and repeatedly talk about the same events concerning the Sutpen family, but the ways of narrating these episodes are always diverse and even contradictory. For instance, regarding what really happened between Henry and Bon, we get Rosa's version, the townspeople's rumor, General Compson's telling, Mr. Compson's retelling of his father's telling, Quentin's conjecture, Shreve's interpretation (he is an outsider to the South), etc. Quentin is unable to get an objective view of the episodes when listening to Rosa's narration, because

Rosa's understanding of these events bars his understanding. In Shreve's view, to perceive things through a Southerner's perspective was just as seeing events portrayed in the theater. Even the same person cannot maintain a consistent voice. While Quentin talks with Rosa about old times, the novel informs us, that there seem to be two Quentins talking with each other (4). Even at the end of the story, the reader still cannot find a unified voice in to tell what has really happened. The diversity of voices provokes a profound doubt about language's capacity to provide a totally objective representation of reality. Meanwhile, the orchestration of diverse voices reveals the potential of language, in the form of narrative to deal with the issue of communication at a time when faith is wavering that factual reality has an inner cohesion.

In narrative the orchestration of diverse voices is also a way to compensate for the linear structure of language in a phonetic alphabet. In an alphabetic language, the meaning of words solely corresponds to the sounds of letters. The sound of a word vanishes as soon as it appears. Therefore, the comprehension of verbal expressions keeps following the appearance of sounds. There is no inner drive within language to motivate the listener or reader to think transversely or retrospectively. Certain formal patterns in literature, such as rhythmical patterns in poetry and anti-chronological arrangements in drama, assist the listener or reader in breaking the spell of the linear structure. In narrative, the diversity of voices is an intrinsic power, drawing the reader back to the same issue through different perspectives. If we look at the italicized passages at the end of Chapter Eight in Absalom, Absalom! (280-86), we can see that the orchestration of diverse voices may elevate our understanding to the point where different voices are

"compounded each of both yet either neither" (Faulkner 280).

In Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner does not explicitly identify the narrator of these italicized passages, as he does in most cases pertaining to different narrative voices. We can infer that these passages basically are Quentin's conjecture of what really happened during the final scene between Henry and Bon. Shreve, the other person present, obviously shares Quentin's version of the story. Otherwise, he would have interrupted Quentin during his vocalization, as he does all the time in the other cases. Actually, the novel's narrator tells us that both of them transcend the limits of time and place, "both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago." Moreover, "both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon" (280). In other words, in demystifying this episode, both Quentin and Shreve agree that both Henry and Bon believe the reason Henry had to kill Bon was that "his mother was part negro" (283). Given the time span (forty-six years) and the striking differences between their cultural backgrounds (Quentin is from the South and Shreve, who is from Canada, states repeatedly that he does not always understand the behavior of Southerners at all), their interpretative agreement is undoubtedly significant. All four agree that Henry had no choice but killing Bon for fear of miscegenation. In other words, despite the time and cultural differences, to these four minds, violating the segregation of race was the most unacceptable thing in life.

Faulkner usually identifies the source of the information to help readers reconstruct his stories. In his full-length manuscript of Absalom, Absalom!, he also wrote passages that had Sutpen telling General Compson that Bon was his son and part black (Langford 260-65), but he canceled these passages in the novel's published form. Faulkner means to let the reader

conceive this joint conjecture as the consciousness coming from the cultural stratum. In these passages, we also sense the weight of racial segregation on both Henry and Sutpen's subconsciousness. When Henry receives the news from Sutpen, he is shocked out of the psychological balance he is trying to keep between his relationships to his father and to Bon, and thus left "stumbling in the dark" (283), both physically and psychologically. He regards this news as unacceptable, and does not argue with himself as he did over the issue of incest. He is conscious of the things happening around him but loses the ability to act accordingly. He is "stooping through the entrance" (Ibid.), not only because he physically bends down, but also because he is morally lowered by the weight of his subconscious. In the joint conjecture, Henry had no choice but to prevent the miscegenation in order to accommodate the morality which both Quentin and Shreve believe were rooted in his subconscious: "he knew what he would do; it now depended on what Bon would do" (284).

In understanding the relationship between Henry and Bon, what strikes the reader's mind but seems never to trouble both Quentin and Shreve is the contrast between the guilt of incest and the "guilt" of miscegenation. From other voices we have already learned that the relationship of Henry to Bon is more than just the bond between two brothers. Henry proves that he would rather cut off his blood relationship to his father than abandon his friendship with Bon. He adheres to this relationship even at the expense of his relationship to his family. Henry even tolerates Bon's intention of an incestuous marriage to his sister Judith. However, to both Quentin and Shreve's understanding, the limit to his love for Bon was miscegenation. In

their conjecture, there is no question that Henry would rather kill Bon to prevent this miscegenation. They also realize that the awareness of this limit also existed in Bon's mind. He "knew" that Henry would kill him if he insisted on marrying Judith.

This raises a rather puzzling question: why did Bon rather "force" Henry to kill him instead of just giving up his sinister attempt? Both Quentin and Shreve had already learned that love was not the reason Bon wanted to marry Judith. Bon's motive is to gain Sutpen's attention and eventually force Sutpen to acknowledge him as his son. He threatens Henry (and through Henry threatens Sutpen) with an incestuous marriage to Judith. Unexpectedly, Henry almost overcomes his fear of incest. Now, as Quentin and Shreve understand it, Bon knew that to both Henry and Sutpen the barrier of miscegenation was an insurmountable barrier. As Sutpen himself confesses, "He must not marry her" (283). Bon knows the strength of this treat in the South's political and cultural milieu and tries to use this weapon to "force" Sutpen to acknowledge him.

The episode narrated in these passages starts with the conversation between Sutpen and Henry. It is worth noting that both Quentin and Shreve are not surprised by the conjecture that Sutpen avoids a confrontation between him and Bon, although this cowardice is out of keeping with his character. They both apparently understand that Sutpen dared not publicize his own miscegenation, which resulted in Bon's birth. Sutpen is in an insoluble predicament. If he acknowledges Bon as his son, he is admitting that he himself has committed miscegenation; if he keeps refusing to acknowledge Bon, Bon will take advantage of Judith's feelings and produce an incestuous and a miscegenational scandal. Neither of these alternatives is acceptable.

There is no doubt that like Henry and Bon, Sutpen is aware of what will happen between his two sons after Henry learns the truth. Obviously, at least to Quentin and Shreve's understanding, Sutpen would rather lose one of his sons, or even both of them, than tolerate another miscegenation in his family. Given this circumstance, to the four minds in the joint conjecture the voice which states "he must not marry her," turns out to be the voice of a command: "You must not let him marry her!"

As Richard Gray observes, in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, "no voice speaks the simple truth and every voice is remorselessly speculative" (206). In the passages we are discussing here, the anxiety over race relations is almost palpable. However, this anxiety is so complicated that it cannot be expressed straightforwardly. Here, different voices draw us repeatedly back to the issue, leading our attention to the different ways in which the issue has been addressed. In this novel the orchestration of voices highlights the function of narrative to amend the linear structure of language.

As a special type of verbal expression, the orchestration of diverse voices objectifies the voices with which it is concerned. The sounds have disappeared, but the voice leaves its traces in the other voices' responses to it. In Absalom, Absalom!, each person's voice is an echo of the history. Each voice spreads an individual interpretation of the history. Voices interact with each other. The resonance of the voices is the emerging version of the history we are conceiving. In the beginning of the novel, while talking about Rosa's telling of the story to Quentin, Faulkner lets the narrator make a very important observation. He points out, "Her voice would not cease, it would just vanish," then, repeats,

> and the voice not ceasing but vanishing into and then out of the long intervals like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand, and the ghost mused with shadowy docility as if it were the voice which he haunted where a more fortunate one would have had a house. (4)

Here, the contrast between "ceasing" and "vanishing" is instructive. In his A New Approach to English Grammar, on Semantic Principles, R. M. W. Dixon explains that in semantic analysis, in contrast to the word "finish," the word "cease" has a "subjective orientation" (175). It most often refers to the volition of the subject--he or she withdraws involvement (241). In our case, Faulkner apparently tells us that the sounds of Rosa's telling might stop, but the voice that carries out her relationship to what she has said will never stop asserting itself. The word "vanish" can mean either to disappear or to become invisible. In the passage "vanishing into and then out of the long intervals like a stream," it obviously means being invisible. Rosa's voice has vanished into other people's like Quentin's speculation, but never fails to assert itself out here and there, just like "a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand." It haunts Quentin throughout the whole novel, disturbing the otherwise-seemingly-plausible peacefulness of his consciousness. These and other voices thereby gain their own identities, and sometimes even talk to one another without being attachments to their speakers. Like the voices of "the two separate Quentins" (4), they are talking "in the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage" (5).

We learn history through language. Language embodies voices as part of people's understanding of historical events. Voices provide a starting point for further thinking. These voices also challenge one's own version of

interpretation. David Ragan maintains, "for many readers, it is not Sutpen's downfall, but Quentin's reaction to it which is the foundation for much of the novel's undeniable power" (15). However, Quentin never had the chance to know Sutpen in person. What he comes to know about Sutpen's tragedy is based on the stories told by other persons in different voices. Therefore, his reaction to this tragedy is not only a reaction to Sutpen's downfall itself, but also a reaction to the different manners of relating the story. When Rosa invites him over and starts to tell him the story, he knows that she wants the story to be told to people who were not personally involved, and wants it to be told in the manner that she is telling him. He understands (in italics) that to her mind, only through her way of telling the story will people "know at last why God let us lose the War" (6). Rosa's voice has the heavy accent of a typical Southern woman. As Quentin understand it (in italics again), in Rosa's mind, the reason that God let the South lose the War was "that only through the blood of our men and the tears of our women could He stay this demon and efface his name and lineage from the earth" (Ibid.). It seems that throughout the whole novel, Quentin alway argues with Rosa's voice in interpreting the tragedy. After three years and an education at Harvard, as we have already seen in the above discussion, he reaches his own conclusion and interprets the tragedy in the light of miscegenation. However, in his final conjecture, we can still discern the voice of a Southern woman who, being racially prejudiced but still immersed with the obsessions and loves motivated by human nature, lacks the mental latitude to explain the waste of blood and tears which God should have forbidden.

As we have observed in the previous chapter, in a narrative, a pronoun

is not a general, non-identity and replaceable substitute, but an active entity that acquires its identification through the acts it has been performing. Instead of being the substitute for a name, conceptually, a personal pronoun in a narrative precedes the name that substitutes for it, since it is the pronoun, an "I" or "he," that signals the character's relation to the narrator. For instance, in Mr. Compson's narration, along with the people in Yoknapatawpha, the reader first learns that there is a "he" intruding into the life in Yoknapatawpha. When the reader reaches the point that the people in Yoknapatawpha has attached the name Sutpen to the "he", the stranger's image already "went back and forth among the places of business and of idleness and among the residences in steady strophe and antistrophe" with the gossip caused by his deeds (24). In other words, his name is an assemblage of different voices centered around the pronoun that signifies an agent of action in the narrative. In this sense, Faulkner insists (in the voice of the narrator of the whole story), "the mere names were interchangeable and almost myriad" (7).

However, in Absalom, Absalom! there are two elements that do not handily give in to linguistic analysis. These are the elements lying beneath the layer of language. Everyone take them for granted even before they start to materialize their thoughts in language. The first element is the identification of sex. In the novel, the pronoun in the first place has to be identified with a certain sex. For certain actions, in the circumstance and people's consciousness as described in the novel, can not be done by women, and certain sensitivities cannot be possessed by men. For instance, Mr. Compson always draws a clear line between men's and women's attitudes and

sensitivities. Women suspect things which none of men does (29); "the assurance of the women became one with the men's surprise"(31); "there were men as well as women who believe ..." (32); and "this time there were more men than women even who picture him ..."(33), etc. There are even the "female crisis" (39), "male principle" (47), and "muscular habit" (75) In this novel the second element that precedes the occurrence of pronoun before anyone is able to cast a voice over it is the identification of being a negro. A negro cannot be considered a "he" or "she" without further modification. Therefore, on his or her first appearance, in almost every character's voice, a negro is always called a "nigger," "negro" or "negress," to indicate the naturalized unnaturalness that is beyond linguistic conscience. If language is the strata of human understanding of the world, then the structure of language does reflect human nature to a certain extent. In both English and Chinese, the constitution of a personal pronoun (the separation of the male and the female) acknowledges the difference between men and women. However, it never permits a racial classification. The division between races, such as black, yellow and white, should be a category subordinate to the concept embodied by a personal pronoun. In Absalom, Absalom!, the unbalanced structure concerning the function of personal pronoun in narrative certainly strikes the reader's mind with a harsh note.

What distinguishes Absalom, Absalom! as one of the finest novels in American literature is not only the story it tells, but also the way in which it is told. In this story, everyone live with tales. Everyone are trying to build up the inherited and surrounding world by recalling the absent history in each of their own voices. Language erects a mirror in front of a person while one is telling something to oneself. Language also shapes one's fate by imposing

other people's expectations through tales.

Absalom, Absalom! ends with Quentin's trying to convince both Shreve and especially himself of his feelings toward the South:

> "I dont hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; "I dont hate it," he said, *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark: *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!* (303)

Quentin is the one who needs to understand the history of his people through a coherent tale. Thus, he keeps integrating new information into the story he repeatedly tells himself. He needs to hear someone (including himself) telling the story in order to believe it, for language has more power than the fact itself. To hear a thing sometimes is more convincing than seeing it in person. When Quentin is listening to his father telling him about Sutpen saying goodbye to Clytie after Ellen's death, the description is so vivid that Quentin thinks, "he could see it; he might even have been there." Then he realizes, "No. If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain" (155). Alarmed by Shreve's comment that he hated the South, in the above passage Quentin is puzzled by his ambivalent feelings about the history of his own people. He knows that his feeling cannot be simplistically categorized as hatred. For he does not measure things using the standards of an unsophisticated Northern mind like Shreve's, just as he would never call Miss Rosa "Aunt Rosa" as Shreve keeps doing no matter how many times he corrects him. However, he senses the ambivalence of his feelings that are conveyed by the story he is telling. This is why he reacts so alertly that the narrator has to use two adverbs plus an adverbial phrase ("quickly," "at once," "immediately") to

emphasize it. He knows that hatred is not his true feelings, so that he states to Shreve that "I dont hate it." However, Quentin cannot find the right word to define his feelings, and had no other version of the story he to tell in order to convey the implication more properly. Therefore, he has to repeat this statement to himself, in order to convince himself of the self-image molded by the power of language.

If hearing is a form of substantiating the significance of life, we can observe this not only in Quentin but in other characters as well. Sutpen needs to hear his own story, so he relates it to Quentin's grandfather. He tells it all over in such a manner that he appears not to be talking about himself. "He was telling a story. He was not bragging about something he had done; he was just telling a story about something a man name Thomas Sutpen had experienced, which would still have been the same story if the man had had no name at all" (199). To say or to tell gives one the right to exert oneself (192). To tell about oneself is the way to assure oneself about what has been told. As a matter of fact, what Charles Bon is after, even at the expense of his life, is not Sutpen's property. As he informs Henry (to Quentin and Shreve's understanding), what he really desires is to hear Sutpen's confession that he is his father: "He should have told me. He should have told me, myself, himself"; "I gave him every chance to tell me himself. But he didn't do it" (272). He knows the truth and he knows Sutpen knows it too. Still he wants it to be spoken out loud. People's self-identifications are fabricated within their verbal expressions.

In Absalom, Absalom! people live in a culture with a rich tradition of telling tales. They are caught in the cobweb of language, not matter whether or not they really understand the words they encounter. When they start to

understand the meaning of the words through their own experiences, they have already begun to weave themselves into the web, and are getting to know the roles they are expected to play according to the tales that utilize their words. Thomas Sutpen is an example of this case. When he was a boy, he didn't listen to the "vague and cloudy tales of Tidewater splendor," because in his own living experience, "there was nothing in sight to compare and gauge the tales by and so give the words life and meaning." However, the tales were still ringing in his ears, and "penetrated even his mountains." When he was a youth, he was interested in the tales, but thought they were not applicable to him, since these were the stories of other people in other places. When Sutpen finally realizes the authority of the words, he has already been captured by the tales. "So he had hardly heard of such a world until he fell into it" (180). Language is the means connecting one's present to the past, personal experience to the larger human experience. Tales organize language in the form of narrative. Narrative enables language to exercise its full potential. Absalom, Absalom! is a narrative, which itself is comprised of narratives.

In a phonetic alphabet language, as we have seen in the above discussion, there is no intrinsic connection between the sound and the meaning of a word. Instead, this combination is determined by social conventions. Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! skillfully plays with this characteristic of the phonetic alphabet. To a certain extent, he intends to present some words of this type of language as pronunciations of sounds rather than fixations of meanings. These thus-presented words detach themselves from their lexical meanings, encouraging the reader to understand them in accordance with the voices through which they were uttered, and

with the circumstances that endow them with nuances and subtleties. Rosa gives us an extreme example of the method we may see operating in Faulkner's mind. While talking about her experience of living with Judith and Clytie in Sutpen's house, she maintains that they were like persons of different species, "speaking no language which the other understood, the very simple words with which we were forced to adjust our days to one another being even less inferential of thought or intention than *the sounds which a beast and a bird might make to each other*" (123-124, the italics are mine). To a larger extent, the separation between the sound and the meaning of the word is the rationale for the manipulation of diverse voices.

Absalom, Absalom! itself is an attempt to approach reality through the medium of language. Language's approach to reality is a process involving both loss and gain. Through the characters' experiences, Faulkner makes us aware that to apprehend the world through language involves losing the purity of the original impression of the world, but adds the sophistication to the human insight which is subsequently gained.

As we discussed, in this novel, stories are the major channel through which people get to know their history. However, whether the stories can explain the history or not, as Mr. Compson observes, is the question no one may answer for certain, especially when it comes to the issue of writing. "We have a few old mouth-to-mouth tales; we exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters without salutation or signature, in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames out of some now incomprehensible affection which sound to us like Sanskrit or Chocktaw." People are there, all of them. "They are there, yet something is missing; they are like a chemical formula exhumed along with the letters from that

forgotten chest." The paper is old and faded and falling to pieces, the writing faded, almost indecipherable yet meaningful. People bring them together again and again but nothing happens; "just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves" (80). The reason that words cannot fully catch the substance of the past, as Rosa explains, is that the substance of remembering is "sense, sight smell: the muscles with which we see and hear and feel." Language is the material for mind and thought. Memory is the result of using language, but, stripped from this artificiality, "there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less" (115). Through Mr. Compson's voice, Faulkner uses the term "telepathy" to describe a particular state of comprehension before it is fouled by language. Telepathy is an intuitive communication between Henry and Bon, a comprehension "regardless of sex or age or heritage of race or tongue" (79). This particular example conveys an important notion: it is language (tongue) that comes into play along with the occurrence of the conceptions of sex, age and race.

It is interesting to notice that although Sutpen is willing to tell his story to General Compson, when he reaches the part when he and the girl were engaged, he stops his telling. "He stopped talking, telling it" (205). As we have seen above, he wants to put his past into a story, perhaps in order to become the object of his own contemplation, but comes to a halt at this particular point. What obstructs him is not his past experience, but language. We can hardly find any evidence to prove that he regretted what he had done in Haiti, but it is obvious that he did not want to be an outcast in the South. There is no way for him to find a single word in any verbal description of his relationship with Bon's mother that will not provoke racial prejudice. As soon as he starts

to use language to substantiate his experience, the human relationship which has been instituted within language will inevitably impose itself upon his image in the way that is different from his own conception. He does not want to lie, does not want to deny this part of history, does not want to make himself oblivious to what had happened in his life, but he cannot find a way to counter the institutions existing within language itself. Therefore, the only thing he can do is to let it pass without saying anything, without instituting his experience through language. "Then he stopped" (Ibid.). It seems to me that to make him stop here not only achieves greater suspense, but also reflects the predicament Sutpen suffers.

In Absalom, Absalom! the relationship of language to the things it refers is not presented mechanically as the relationship between the signifier and the signified. There is an understanding of the discrepancy between language and the referent. As Rosa speculates, "there are some things for which three words are three too many, and three thousand words that many words too less" (134). On the one hand, language does codify moralities and makes Henry's mind a "puritan's provincial" one (91). On the other hand, the same language expression does not necessarily mean the same thing to different people, no matter if it is related either to the gender or to an obligation (93-94). However, without language, it is impossible to think and communicate. As Rosa says, if remembrance stays away from language and indulges itself merely in sense, sight and smell, "its resultant sum is usually incorrect and false and worthy only of the name of dream" (115). Now the question becomes how language works independently to create a reality which can affect people.

When Judith talks with Quentin's grandmother about the effect of

reading letters, she infers a procedure that is analogous to the way of how language affects on people's minds. This is also the way in which Absalom, Absalom! is designed to affect the reader's mind:

> Read it if you like or dont read it if you like. Because you make so little impression, you see. You get born and you try this and you dont know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they dont know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug; ... it would be at least a scratch, something, something that might make a mark on something that *was* once for the reason that it can die someday, while the block of stone cant be *is* because it never can become *was* because it cant ever die or perish ... (100-101, author's italics)

To tell and to listen, to write or to read, is like making a scratch, or, as Mr. Compson remarks when explaining what Judith said, making the "undying mark on the blank face of the oblivion to which we are all doomed" (102). When you speak of something out loud, this utterance does not necessarily reveal its full meaning even to you, but you leave a trace on the otherwise blank face of human mentality. You say something in response to another's utterance, and other people conceive what you have said in accord with their own understanding. Like a piece of the rug, the meaning of the verbal expression is woven with the threads of different voices that are "all in one

another's way." Like the speaker, the uttered sound is doomed to oblivion, although in its continuous changes, language becomes the assemblage of the "undying mark(s)." Along with the human deeds it records within it, language preserves itself and turn into a "block of stone." Different voices may vanish from hearing but will not disappear, for when making language, "each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug."

Narrative is the form of language that makes the vanished voices distinguishable. Absalom, Absalom! is a successful effort which proves how powerful a narrative can be in exercising the potential of language. Various versions of the story--Rosa's, Quentin's, Quentin's father's, General Compson's, Shreve's and the joint conjectures-- all complement one another, not only in the sense that each of them provides a segment of the plot, but, more significantly, in the sense that each narrator contributes to the story with a unique voice.

The orchestration of diverse voices creates a reality that substantiates itself in language. This language reality, in turn, negotiates the problems emanated at the brink between the real world and the unreal world we encounter constantly in our daily lives. It is not difficult to imagine Rosa's remembrance of the Sutpens as a mixture of the elements based on her matter-of-fact observation and the elements stimulated by her frustration and sexual disappointment. Without putting the remembrance into language and referring to the narrations in other voices, even to herself, there is no way to grasp the subtlety between the real and the unreal. The paradox between absence and presence is a constant mystery in Absalom, Absalom!. It is related to the gossiped existence of a character, the body of a dead person, the expected or unexpected result of a known or unknown action, the climax or

anti-climax of the conjectured plot, the consequence of tacit agreements on morality, the object of desire, the vision of fantasy, the eruption of emotion, the reason for frustration, the scene in the imagining eyes, etc. Without the aid of language and the manipulation of diverse voices, there is no way to formulate the absence of the expected presence, or the presence that lacks the essence for its existence.

In Absalom, Absalom!, history breathes its life through voices. To understand history, as Shreve learns to do at the end of novel (301), means learning to decipher words. Quentin needs Shreve to "tell" him, in order to clarify the idea of future, even though its implication is in the story they both know; and Shreve, even though he has already had his own opinion, needs Quentin to "tell" him, in order to hear Quentin's attitude toward the South (302-03). Silence means oblivion. In the novel, the house on Sutpen's Hundred is the symbol of the vitality of the Sutpens and the resource for the mysterious tales. When Quentin finds the house is on fire, "Quentin could see it" (300). He can see the fury of the fire, but, as the narrator informs us, he cannot hear the sound that should accompany the raging fire. As the symbolic destroyer, "the light thin furious creature (was) making no sound at all now" (Ibid.). A silent world is a world which does not really exist. To have no sound is to have no life.

The Potentiality of Language and the Closure of Narrative: Cao Xueqin's Dream of the Red Chamber

Narrative is a form of verbal expression that has an internal drive to

activate some potential qualities of language. In turn, as we have observed at the end of the first section of this chapter, language substantiates the narrative movement that leads the reader's attention in various directions at the same time. The formal structure of narrative demands textual closure. The enclosed language and the narrative movement interact within this textual enclosure. The joint act does not stop at the dam erected by the ending of the story. The energy stored in the reader's mind through knowing the development of the plot bounces back, portending the other directions which the narrative movement involves, such as the narrator's way of presenting the story; the author's intention; the convincing interpretation; the referential reality; the way of understanding; and its relation to other narratives, etc. The textual enclosure is not necessarily the periphery of a narrative. What gives the reader's imagination free rein in reading a narrative unleashes language's potential.

The potential of language discussed here refers to language's capacity to allude to something beyond the thing it directly sates, signifies, refers, describes or indicates. It is the capacity that dwells in the nature of language. There are some special ways of organizing language, like figures of speech, that explore this property of language and, for instance, use a nonliteral or intensive sense of a word or words to create a forceful, dramatic, or illuminating image. Both the English and Chinese languages have this potential. In this section I will make the case for its presence in Chinese, as this relates to its manifestation in narrative. There is a particular reason for this choice. Unlike in the Western tradition, where the study of language started with the emphasis on the one-to-one phonetic relationship between the signifier and the signified, in the Chinese tradition the study of language

started with the emphasis on the unbalanced relationship between the signifier and the signified, encouraging people to pay attention to the alluded part of the world which cannot be directly conveyed in the verbal expression. This habitual way of comprehending language, in turn, plays a significant part in formulating how people think. There is no need to argue that both the language consciousness and the thinking pattern must leave traces of their influences on the formation of narrative. In this section, I will discuss this potential of language as it is shown in Cao Xueqin's 曹雪芹 (1715 [1724] -1763 [1764]) and Gao E 高鄂 's (ca. 1738-1815) *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢 Dream of the Red Chamber).[54]

Epistemologically, Chinese is a pictographic language. However, this does not mean, as it is commonly believed since Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, that a Chinese-speaking person reads each Chinese character as a graphic miniature of the represented object. Although at its beginning, pictograph is the essence of the Chinese language (Ma 21), even at its very early stage, the Chinese language already developed a system that connected the meaning of a word to its sound. In the earliest epistemological dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (The Explanatory Dictionary of Characters, A.D. 100), of the nine thousand words it records, more than ninety percent are made of with a phonetic component. Yet there indeed is an impact which the essence of the pictographic nature has left on the people's thinking. This is the

[54] In this essay, I will mainly focus on the first eighty chapters written by Cao Xueqin, ignoring the inconsistency between them and the later forty chapters reportedly added by Gao E. This inconsistency is irrelevant to this discussion. I use Cao Xueqin as the name of the author when I refer to the first eighty chapters, Gao E for the following chapters, and both of them or simply the "authors" for the content jointly related to the whole novel.

conviction that language offers a direct connection to the world, just like that of a picture to the imitated object. It is a conviction that is reinforced by the fact that there are so many words containing pictographic components. As James Liu observes in his posthumous work Language--Paradox--Poetics, "In general, whereas Western thinkers concerned with the nature of language conceived of writing as a representation of spoken language, which was in turn conceived of as an intermediary between the world and human beings, the Chinese saw a direct relationship between writing and the world, without the necessary intermediary of spoken language" (18).

If the major channel through which a phonetic language performs its function is symbolic, then, the major channel through which the Chinese language performs its function is synecdochic. In the former case, a word is associated to its referred object only by convention. It is alien to the object. In the latter case, a word relates to the referred object supposedly by reproducing a part of its image. It is akin to the object. In literature, the products of both languages seek for meanings beyond their direct reach. In the former case, it is for something else symbolized by what has already been said; in the latter case, it is the thing for which what has already been said is only a part. Recently, some critics, such as Haun Saussy in his The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic, argue that the concept of allegory explicated in particular by Paul de Man is applicable to Chinese literature, and, in Saussy's words, "under the circumstances, to speak of a Chinese form of allegory would amount to erasing the differences between East and West" (25). However, if we follow Saussy and define allegory as a verbal expression that "says one thing in words and another in meaning" (13), it is not difficult to conceive of allegory as a

rhetoric closely related to a culture based on a phonetic alphabet. It seems to me that in the Chinese language, the common ground for verbal expressions is: to say part of a thing in words and the whole thing in meaning.

Since ancient times, the synecdochic nature of the Chinese language has puzzled Chinese thinkers with the question of whether or not language is capable of representing the world. A pictograph can only imitate a part of the object though it is meant to signal the whole thing. Therefore, the question of whether language is capable of representing the world leads to the question of whether a part of a thing is capable of standing for the whole thing. For instance, as Zhang Longxi points out in The Tao and the Logos, in the mind of the founder of Taoism, the named totality is no longer the totality itself (27), for name itself is only a part of the totality. However, there are some other theorists who hold more positive opinions. In their views, cosmologically there are two elements that grant language this capability. On the one hand, although language only imitates a part of the thing, the part it imitates always has an intrinsic relation to the whole to which it belongs. On the other hand, in ancient Chinese philosophies, both the subject and the object emanate from the essence of the universe, As the means to connect the speaking person and the referential world, language leans on the harmony between the person as the subject and the world as the object; and the harmonious resonance between the subject and the object lays out the ground for an intuitive comprehension of the world, even though this comprehension is only inspired by glimpses of the speculative world.

Since language is the most important means (actually, the only means before the electronic era) through which human beings are able to comprehend the world beyond direct contact with their five senses, the way

language is perceived profoundly predisposes the way of thinking. And both language and the way of thinking have a bearing on the formation of narrative. In English narratives, given the linear pattern of English, the whole structure of the verbal expression has decisive power. The significance of a part lies in its contribution to the development of the whole (e.g. the plot). On the contrary, in Chinese narratives, based on the habit of knowing the language, the appreciation of the connotation of each relatively independent part (e.g. a chapter) is the key to elucidating the denotation of the narrative as a whole. The entire structure of the narrative plays the role of connecting the parts, textually and thematically, but lacks the power to conclude all implications the reader may derive from the appreciation of the parts. I often feel that making this distinction is a crucial step in leading students from Western cultures to an appreciation of classical Chinese novels.

The division of chapters is a generic characteristic of the Chinese novel. Most Chinese novels (certainly all of the well-known ones) are *zhanghui xiaoshuo* 章回小說 (the chapter-based novel). It is commonly believed that this characteristic of the Chinese novel derives from the tradition of prompt scriptures. The early novels, such as *Sanguo Yanyi* 三國演義 (The Three Kingdoms) and *Shuihu Zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), developed from the prompt scripture written for storytellers. And storytellers had to divide long stories into time-allotted segments. Therefore, it was convenient for the novelist to write novels that consisted in relatively independent units (*zhang* 章 or *hui* 回). While this certainly is a reason, I believe that there may be other reasons. As a matter of fact, some later novels were created personally by single writers and not meant to serve as prompt scriptures for storytellers,

such as *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase) and *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Chamber). They are still chapter-based novels. As Andrew Plaks observes, the title of each chapter (a couplet) in the Dream of the Red Chamber is the summary of the chapter (Archetype and Allegory 72). In other words, each chapter can be summarized as a relatively independent unit. Eugene Eoyang provides us with an example earlier than those early novels. He examines the manuscript of a story about the emperor Shun 舜, recorded in the 9th and 10th centuries and found in the cave of Tun-huang. In his analysis of the narrative, one of the conclusions Eoyang has drawn is, "the structure of the story is *serial*, one scene leading to another almost identical, like indistinguishable links in a chain" (47, my italics). Obviously, in this case, the appreciation of the whole story rests on the reader's sensitivity in grasping each scene; and the appreciation of each independent scene inspires the reader to establish associations among seemingly indistinguishable scenes, in order to form a comprehension of the whole serial. The language-oriented comprehension thus exercises its influence on the formation of narrative. The appreciation of narrative reinforces the habits cherished by the language-oriented comprehension.

The accentuation of particular sections of a narrative challenges our habitual way of reading a narrative. This habit looks for the gist of the work in the climax of the plot. According to traditional Chinese literary criticism, every successful novel must have some chapter(s) that communicate(s) the soul and spirit of the work to the reader. Such a chapter is commonly known as the "eye" of the work. In some cases, the ending of the novel, such as in the Dream of the Red Chamber, is mainly a manifestation or an ironic lack of fulfillment of the gist which has already been displayed in particular

chapter(s). It is not only that particular chapters conduct the reader's imagination to the novel's ending, but, more significantly, that the ending also leads the reader's attention back to certain chapter(s).

Chapter Five occupies a central position in the Dream of the Red Chamber. First, it predicts the destinies of the major female characters and the drama of the intrigued passions through the song-suites on the twenty-four beauties. Second, it displays the conflict between lust and social convention and creates the term *yi yin* 意淫 "lust of mind," in order to deal with the haunting theme to which even the ending of the novel can only provide an escape as the solution. Since this case shows how a particular chapter or even a particular phrase can be as pregnant with significant implications as the ending of the narrative, it is justifiable to give a detailed discussion of it below.

A sense of helplessness is the most striking feeling one may conceive in reading the Dream of the Red Chamber. On the one hand, there are irresistible desires resulting from natural human impulses; on the other hand, there are uncontrollable social forces from without interrupting the courses of the characters' lives. Everyone living in the mundane world is trapped by the entanglement of lust and the imposing social forces. The artistic charm of the novel partly lies in its tragic ending. However, the tragic ending mainly manifests the impossibility of solving the problem, and this impossibility has already been indicated in Chapter Five. The protagonist's transformation into a monk renounces his lust, but does not unravel the conflict between lust and social convention. At the beginning of the novel, even the image of the stone itself alone actually conveys this helpless feeling . It is a rare stone that is supposed to be capable of building a corner of the universe, but, while

confronting the human affairs, it is merely able to record what it has seen. The magic power it might exert in building the universe turns out to be impotent when dealing with human affairs.

Lust and social forces somehow function as independent agents in the Dream of the Red Chamber. It is not that the conflict between them matures at the climax of the plot, but that the confrontation between them reaches its climax in several central scenes. On the one hand, no matter whether they are young nobles, aristocratic ladies, servants, maids, officials, civilians or even nuns, people act under the pressure of various lustful desires that counter their conscientious wills. There is a poem called *Hao-liao ge* 好了歌 (Won-Don Song) that recapitulates this phenomenon. As it observes, everyone know that it must be euphoric to lead a life of the immortal, but nobody is able to resist the temptation of lust for power, money, a beautiful wife or descendants (17).[55] On the other hand, no matter how high the position one hold, how rich one's family is, and how well one's condition appears at moment, everyone is subject to unexpected disasters caused by certain alien powers, such as the Emperor's arbitrary decision, the interference of a strange person like an unknown monk, and even some seemingly insignificant gossip. Therefore, everyone is in the grip of two forces that were determining one's fate but out of one's own control: the lustful impulse from the inside and social

[55] The edition of Dream of the Red Chamber I use is the 1992 edition collated and annotated by the Institute of the Dream of the Red Chamber of the Chinese Arts Academy (中國藝術研究院紅樓夢研究所), and published by *Renmin wenxue chubanshe* 人民文學出版社 (the People's Literature Publishing House) in Beijing. Although I have frequently consulted the translation by David Hawkes (The Story of the Stone, 5 vols., Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973-1987) and that by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (3 vols., Peking [Beijing]: Foreign Languages Press, 1978-1980), the translations in this essay are all mine.

power from the outside. Every society needs to compromise between these two forces in order to maintain its well-being. In the society described in the novel, this compromise has obviously broken down. The bond between these two forces is reassembled into a specific relationship with all its intensity preserved. This novel is also named "A Rare Mirror of the Affairs between Men and Women" (風月寶鑒), for apparently, in this specific relationship depicted in the novel, the tension between sexual lust and related social conventions indeed plays a special role in the novel.

In Chinese the word sexual lust (*yin*, 淫) has a twofold meaning. It indicates sexual activities as well as implies unconstrained excessiveness. Originally, in Xu Shen's 許愼 *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (The Explanatory Dictionary of Characters), *yin* only refers to the natural progress of a gradual penetration caused by excess, especially related to water (551). This etymological meaning tells us that in the very beginning, when the Chinese people started to use this word, they had already realized the self-stretching tendency contained in the nature of sexual activities. In the Dream of the Red Chamber, due to the special circumstances set up in a declining noble family, the longing for sensual pleasure in sex inflates itself to the point where no moral condition has any constraining power. Beside the explicit descriptions of some titled scenes such as "Jia Rui conceived a lustful desire while attracted by Xifeng" (Chapter 11), "Xifeng stormed with jealousy while outraged by the unexpected scene" (Chapter 44), "Jia Lian took a concubine in secret" (Chapter 65), and "Baochan set up a trap in the pursuance of lust" (Chapter 91), through some implicit references, such as what Jiao Da says when he is drunk, the ornaments displayed in Qin Keqing's room, and Jiang Yuhan's uttered opinion

about the mores in the Jia Family when he refuses to marry You Erjie, it is inevitable that the reader senses the unrestrained lust. Lust stretches itself like an antennae that sticks out at every spot only to get even more protuberant in obtaining the sensual pleasure. Looking into the nun Miaoyu's turbulent feeling toward Baoyu before she is kidnapped, it is not difficult to discern the temptations of sexual pleasure even in the mind of a persons as self-contained as Miaoyu. If we see the Chinese character 淫 as the pictograph of lust, then, to a certain extent, we may see the whole narrative as an effort to explicate every detail represented by each dot or line within this character.

What happens in Chapter Five is by and large a microcosm of what happens in the whole novel. The chapter title contains the book title: *hong lou men* 紅樓夢. This coincidence indicates that what happens in the whole story is hardly distinguished from the dream Baoyu has in this chapter in the Red Chamber (*hong lou* 紅樓). The word dream (*meng* 夢) here also creates a visual framework that absorbs the issues lingering between reality and unreality. In this chapter, the way Disenchantment deals with Baoyu's sexual desire is comprised of two parts. On the one hand, she offers Baoyu the most desirable woman in his dream, letting him release the pressure by enjoying whatever he desires (82). On the other hand, she warns Baoyu before his dream that one who believes in the total indulgence of sensual principles and totally disregards his social responsibilities is doomed to be disillusioned. If, as she infers, people merely follow their sexual desires and only pursue stimulating objects such as a pretty face, a lustful song, a charming dance and sexual ecstasy, then society would lose the cohesive power to regulate people's behaviors (90). However, the problem we have in the Dream of the Red

Chamber essentially is not whether one should respect social convention, but that there is no social convention that still has the power to regulate people's sexual behavior effectively to benefit society as a whole. Inevitably, Baoyu's sweet dream virtually turns into a nightmare.

In the novel, social convention is called *shi dao* 世道 (Ibid.). Literally, this means "the way of the world." This is another visual image that embodies tacit agreements on morality, family decrees and state laws. We indeed find some *shi dao* 世道 in the novel. For instance, Baoyu's mother never tolerates the maid who arouses her suspicions of seducing the young master. Some books like *Xixiang Ji* 西廂記 (The Story of the West Chamber) are not allowed among girls. Any object with obscene pictures, like the embroidered purse picked up by the maid Sa Dajie, are absolutely forbidden. There are certainly some prohibitions carried by the law to protect innocent women. However, if we examine the cases more carefully, we find that these decrees and laws are merely some traces left over from some other purpose. For instance, Lady Wang, Baoyu's mother, insists on expelling Qingwen because, she claims, she cannot tolerate the girl's manner and appearance.' If we notice the similarities the narrator stresses between Daiyu and Qingwen in their manner and appearance, and the tolerance Lady Wang shows to the relationship between Baoyu and Xiren, we may reasonably interpret that Lady Wang's dislike for Qingwen is actually a symbol of her hidden fear of Daiyu, since Daiyu is a threat to the would-be marriage between Baoyu and Baocai. This marriage would certainly strengthen the relationship between the Jia Family and Lady Wang's own family (Baocai is one of her close relatives). Likewise, in the core plot, the incident of the embroidered purse is mainly used as a weapon for the struggle among the different branches of the Jia Family. In the case of

those forbidden books, if we contrast them to the obscene scenes participated by the male characters, such as those lewd lines made at the party by Xue Pan (397), we'll understand that such decrees are mainly meant to keep the women in a subordinate position, a position that is later manifested in Yingchun's marriage. As for the laws which are supposed to protect innocent women, from two cases when Xue Pan seizes Xianglin and another innocent woman, and murders the people who are in his way, and the case when Jia Lian takes hold of You Erjie, we can clearly see that such laws also provide opportunities for executive officials to ask for political favors and money in exchange for the acquittal of the criminals. In the novel, those who violate the moral codes have no social conscience; those who are supposed to back up the conventions officially only superficially adhere to these values which actually serve as the chips bargaining in the game of politics. The argument presented by Disenchantment (also by Baochai and Xiren in other chapters) urging Baoyu to abandon the habit of mixing with girls, is mainly based on the reason that it will prevent him from devoting all of his energy to secure a political career. Yet there is no one who can give him a positive opinion of what is the proper way to deal with the other sex.

However, in the novel there is a new attitude toward sexual relationships and speculation over a new type of balance between sexual desire and social conventions. Cao Xueqin coined a new word to substantiate this new attitude in the novel. The word is *yiyin* 意淫 (lust of mind).

Yiyin 意淫 (Lust of mind), as defined by Disenchantment in Chapter Five, is an obsessive passion born of one's natural faculties. Unlike the common lust that is merely sexual desire, *yiyin*, besides its association with

the longing for the other sex, is involved with emotion, passionate dependence and the tenderness resulting from the harmony between two people. Only through the heart, not through the mouth, is it communicated, and only through the mind rather than through words is it understood. It can win understanding friends among girls, but cannot avoid inviting scandals in the current world (90). This concept thus maintains a conflict within itself. Correspondingly, the word itself is actually a paradoxical combination of the commendatory term *yi* 意 (spiritual) and the derogatory term *yin* 淫 (lust). The word *yiyin* 意淫 (Lust of mind) signals a blend of sexual desire, passionate affection and spiritual awareness. Thus, it has a meaning common lust doesn't have. In Disenchantment's words, "To indulge in women is a kind of lust. To experience the affection aroused in loving women is even more definitely a lust"; however, "although all the lusts essentially are the same, the spirituality involved may be differential" (90). To attach the character 意 (spiritual) to the word stem 淫 (lust) is an intent to associate sexuality with spirituality. In turn, adding the spiritual fulfillment to the sexual impulse shows a tendency to break up the obsolete convention and build a new ground for sexual relationships.

Throughout the entire novel the narrator is struggling with Baoyu's feelings toward Daiyu. The fact that he needs a goddess like Disenchantment's help to explain this feeling indicates that in the mundane moral system he cannot find a extant convention to define this newly-found feeling. This paradox is also indicated in the narrative structure of the novel. On the one hand, the narrator follows the logic of the story of Baoyu's life that heralds a new type of feeling. On the other hand, whenever he needs to change the course of the story significantly, the narrator always appeals to some

supernatural powers, such as dreams, the mysterious monk, and the Jade, the powers that demonstrate both the stubbornness and the impotence of the obsolete social conventions. He cannot help it because there are two contradictory tendencies developing throughout the novel. In reality, Baoyu and his adversaries are living in different realms of mores. Neither of these two systems can force the other to accept its own moral standards. This decisive power has to be assumed by some agent who is able to surpass both of them. The solution offered at the end of the story is already predicted by the nightmare at the end of Chapter Five. There is no place in society for these new feelings and attitudes. The narrator keeps moving through the trajectories among lust, convention and the groundless state for which Baoyu stands. In the dream he falls into the darkness; in reality the only way left to him is to escape from reality. To become a monk simply means repressing natural desires as well as abandoning all social conventions. The path the narrator follows virtually circles back to the theme displayed in this chapter. This chapter is a microcosm rather than an embryo of the whole novel.

In the Chinese manner of conceiving narrative, narrative is not merely a product of language. It sustains a piece of the ongoing life within the textual frame for the reader's speculative contemplation. This idea is reflected in the structure of the Dream of the Red Chamber. The narration is arranged to be seen instead of being heard. The whole story is supposed to be witnessed by the stone, and the stone is supposed to be the narrator of the story. However, the story is not told by the stone to some audience, but is written on the stone, waiting someone to come to read it. Eventually, by chance a certain Taoist is passing the mountain where the stone is situated, and "he accidentally saw the

inscription on a large stone, and the characters were clearly discernible, the narration was in good order" (3-4). He read it from the very beginning (從頭一看, 4), and the narration begins with the saying "let us *see* what is the story on the stone" (且看石上是何故事, 7, my italics). The comment made by the author (Cao Xueqin) himself on the story is "nonsense over all pages" (滿紙荒唐言). However, he asks, "Is there anyone who may decipher the hidden meaning?" (誰解其中味, 7) Therefore, it is a reasonable assumption to say that to read the story in its written form has a special significance. Part of this significance lies in the way to tell what language really is saying from what it has actually say.

In Chinese, there are two characteristics closely related to the issues we are discussing here. One is the clarity of the language; the other is the allusiveness of its usage. Let us first examine the first one. As early as in the time when Confucius preached his doctrines, Chinese scholars started to have a solid conviction that the stability of a state relies on the clarity of the language which has been used. One of the influential Confucian doctrines in the history of Chinese thought is "to give the right name to the right thing" (正名). Xun Kuang 荀況 (fl. 298-238 B.C.) advocates, "Thus, in the way in which the capable sovereign carves names, when the name is established, the named thing has always been differentiated"(695: 257); "knowing that different things should have different names, (one) should give each single different thing a different name. They must not be mis-matched" (695: 258). Liu Xiang 劉向(79-8 B.C.) even maintains, "The principle of all professions is to use a particular expression of language. If the choice of language is proper, the enemy may thereby be defeated; if the choice of language is right to the point, the country will be well guarded" (696: 143). In its early stages, the Chinese

study of language concentrated on the correspondence between language and the things signaled by language, rather than the internal relationships among the different language elements. Most earliest linguistic works, such as *Er Ya* 爾雅 (Approaching the Rightness, before 200 A.D.), *Shouwen Jiezi* 說文解字 (The Explanatory Dictionary of Characters, 100 A.D.) and *Shi Ming* 釋名 (Explanations of Terms, before 220 A.D.), work on establishing a concrete relationship between words and the things these words define, in other words, to consolidate language into another kind of reality that is as reliable as the reality it stands for. Between these two realities, clarity is an indispensable intermediary.

On the other hand, traditionally, the usage of the Chinese language is heavily tinted with allusions, and thus forms the aforesaid second characteristic of the Chinese language: the allusiveness of its usage. Chinese is a language full of idioms (that record the lessons drawn from well-known stories) and allusions (that refer to historical events and figures, the sages' sayings, or certain metaphors created in literary works). Gongsun Long 公孫龍 (fl. 284-259 B.C.) already realized that everything contains a paradox between the name it has and the thing the name may refer to (see Tan, 14). Unlike what we may find in the Western model of literary reading that conventionally leads the reader either to the empirical description or to a fictional or metaphorical dimension beyond the literal description, Chinese writers always play with the paradox between the empirical description of the real object and the allusive meaning under the literal depiction, and maintain the reader's attention to both of them. In *Gudai Hanyu* 古代漢語 (Classical Chinese) , Wang Li 王力 lists eight rhetorical devices commonly used in

classical Chinese, and points out, "Of the aforesaid rhetorics of classical Chinese, most are related to using allusions" (4: 1306). Intellectuals in ancient China always associated in close circles. They read the same books, built personal relationships, and communicated with one another through allusions. These allusions acquired their typological meanings over generations. It was commonly believed that these meanings could only be grasped through the mind, and could not be communicated by word (只可意會不可言傳). The point is, one needs to decipher what language explicitly says in order to apprehend what it implicitly says.

The interplay of these two characteristics of the Chinese language has cultivated a particular reading habit in the mind of a Chinese reader. It is especially true for literature. The reader is constantly inspired to pay attention to both the logic carried out by what has directly been said and the logic intimated by what has been tacitly alluded to. The faculty of association is kept alert. The active state of mind in reading the language is also reflected in the language itself. As Wang Li (王力) observes in his *Hanyu Yufa Shi* 漢語語法史 (A History of the Chinese Grammar), in classical Chinese, "in some places, the logical relationship can be comprehended mentally but not articulated in words (可以意會而不可以言傳)" (481). For instance, the subject of a sentence is often omitted, and so are some conjunctions and some verbs and adverbs that function as conjunctions. In more complicated verbal expressions like narrative, the interplay of the literal reading and the directed association is not only preserved but intensified.

Dream of the Red Chamber is a work that skillfully explores the potential of the Chinese language. In his Introduction to the novel, Qi Liaosheng 戚蓼生 remarks that the novel affects the reader like a voice

singing two songs at the same time (31). Its artistry consists largely in placing the story between what is real and what is unreal.

The story recorded on the stone itself is a reality: a language reality. Its reliability in representing the described world has rarely been questioned. The novel's descriptions of the lives in the garden is lavished with extraordinary accuracy and vivid details. Cao Xueqin himself tells us that he spent ten years in refining the wording of the novel, revising it five times (6). The *Zhiyan* 脂硯 Commentary observes that this novel is akin to poetry in its concern over language purity (*lianzi* 煉字, see Yu Pingbo 220). The novel itself stresses that whatever it offers the reader is "faithfully recorded" (6). For the sake of truthfulness, the recorder of the personally-seen-and-heard (親睹親聞) stories will not make slight alterations for the purpose of flattering the reader's taste (5). The reality created by language is the context through which we come to know the individual characters and events in the story. However, this is the novel's small context.

The title of the novel itself turns this language reality into unreality, calling it a "dream." Since it is a dream, there should be a broader reality when people awaken from the dream. Throughout the novel, the authors use many puns, including the characters' names, to remind the reader that neither the recorded reality nor the language reality is as reliable as assumed. For instance, there is a person who realizes the deception of the mundane glories and predicts the ending of the story at the beginning of the novel. His name is pronounced as *zhen shi yin.* In its possible written forms, this can have different meanings. As the name, it is written as 甄士隱, a last name plus a given name with the possible meaning of "a learned person vanishes."

However, the reader is unmistakably urged to take the strongly alluded meaning of another possible written form 真事隱, which means "the real things have been hidden away." This pun is purposefully employed to break the sequence of the reader's perception in apprehending the language reality, leading the reader's attention to the alluded significance. Cao Xueqin tells us this explicitly at the very beginning of the novel (1), as if afraid that we will miss the punch line. The name of another major witness of the story, *jian yu cun* 賈（假）雨（語）村, as Cao Xueqin reminds us (Ibid.), is also such a pun. With a tonal variation on the last word, it can also be read as 假語存 (the false language exits). Cao Xueqin confesses that he intends to use certain words to interrupt the the reader's train of thought when perceiving of the story, and to pave the way to the reality beyond the dream. At the beginning of the novel, the author says, "in this chapter, whenever the word 'dream' or 'illusion' is used, it is to remind (*tixing* 提醒) the reader's eyes (*yanmu* 眼目). It is also the theme of the work" (Ibid.). It is interesting to notice that before a character in the novel has a sudden insight into life or gets a drive for a new life, such as Zhen Shiyin in Chapter 1, Baoyu in Chapter 5 and Chapter 98, Wang Xifeng in Chapter 13, and Liu Xianglian in Chapter 66, etc., he or she almost always has a dream in which a new significance of life is revealed. In contrast with the language reality, this alluded reality, the reality a person finds when he or she awakens from a dream, is the larger context needed to understand the story.

In the Dream of the Red Chamber, what makes the issue of reality and unreality more complicated is the realness of the alluded reality. For the people living in the mundane world described in the story, by and large, it is in their dreams that they have the glimpses of the other side of their lives,

discovering that the lives they indulged in were essentially desire-prompted illusions. Therefore, the mundane life is the dream (illusion) within a dream. The place where the so-claimed truth of life is revealed is called "Illusory Land of Ultimate Void" (太虛幻境). The couplet inscribed on the stone archway on two sides of the name of the Land reads, "When falseness appears as truthfulness, even truthfulness becomes falseness; where nonbeing takes the presence as being, even being is nonbeing" (9).[56] This stated illusiveness and voidness harbor suspicions about the so-claimed truth uttered by Disenchantment, the monk and the Taoists, encouraging the reader to reach an understanding based on not only the story of the Jia Family, but also the irony between the story and the Illusory Land that overshadows the story. Given this framework, it is apparent that the ending of the Jia Family story is not the ending of the narrative. It has to circle back to the setting of the story: the place beyond the mundane world, in order to complete the irony of these two worlds and thereby reach a deeper meaning. The existence of the language reality on the stone provides the possibility for the act of reading back. At the end of the narrative, the *Kongkong* Taoist "started from the very beginning, *once again* read (the story on the stone) very carefully" (1646, my italics). In this sense, the ending of the narrative is not like the terminal point of a linear sequence, but is like the last brush stroke on a painting.

Not only does the narrative's allusiveness display itself in the framework of the whole novel, it also functions on the local level to create the aura of each scene. For instance, the first line of the story on the stone describes the place where the story takes place. It says, "At that time the Earth

[56] 假作真時真亦假，無為有處有還無。

collapsed on the corner of the Southeast (當日地陷東南)" (7). It refers to the myth in which two gods Gonggong 共工 and Zhuanxu 顓頊 fought for the throne. They broke the pillar that supported the heavens and made a dent on the southeast corner of the Earth. The story of the Dream of the Red Chamber happens in this dent. This allusion indicates the decaying atmosphere in the story. In Chapter 1 when the novel first introduces the previous lives of Baoyu and Daiyu, it says that they originally lived besides a stone called the "three-life stone" (三生石). It is an allusion that comes from the story about a poet named Li Yuan 李源 and a monk named Yuan Guan 圓觀, commonly used to describe the predestined relationship between two people. Here, it gives the reader a hint about the nature of the relationship between Baoyu and Daiyu (8). In Chapter 5, in the description of the decorations and furniture in Qin Keqing's bedroom, each of the mentioned items (Wu Zetian 武則天's rare mirror, Zhao Feiyan's 趙飛燕 gold tray, An Lushan's 安祿山 and Lady Yang's 楊貴妃 quince, Princess Shouyang's 壽陽公主 bed, Princess Tongchang's 同昌公主 curtains, etc.) has a historical story behind it. And all these stories participate in creating the luxury abundant in sensual pleasures, and reinforce the dreamlike aura of Baoyu's experience in the room. There are more than a thousand allusions throughout the whole novel, taken from myths, historical events and figures, well-known poems and dramas, Confucian and Taoist classics, Buddhist stories, history books, and popular tales. Each allusion holds the reader's imagination and demands attention be allotted to the individual scenes for a longer time span than is needed for simply following the development of the plot. Along with the logic displayed in the plot, there is an internal connection among the alluded auras surrounding the individual scenes. The internal connection of the alluded auras coincides with

the plot's logic in the way that intuitive enlightenment coincides with our conceptual perceiving of things in daily life. The ending of a narrative is not necessarily the completion of the narrative. What language has created may go beyond what we can directly conceive in language.

In the Chinese language, the synecdochic nature and the tension between clarity and allusiveness both influence the formation of narrative in the same direction. The organization of Chinese narrative invites the reader to attend to the individualities of major scenes or chapters, reading them not merely as constituent parts of the linear plot. In the Dream of the Red Chamber, there are at least two structural characteristics related to the stress on the individualities of scenes or chapters. First, this tendency is typically strengthened by the integration of poetry in the narrative's composition.

The insertion or integration of poetry into narrative is a hallmark of the Chinese novel. In the first eighty chapters of Dream of the Red Chamber, half contain poems composed by either characters or the narrator. Like most other major Chinese novels, each of its chapters is summarized by a couplet which serves as its title. In his commentary, Zhang Xinzhi 張新之 remarks, "Every one of the poems in the text has a hidden meaning, much like a riddle, The words keep going in one direction, but the eye is drawn elsewhere" (332). These poems serve as rest stations on the road of the narration, acting as parts of the plot while inviting the reader to stop and contemplate. Some poems, like *Haoliao ge* 好了歌 (Won-Don Song, 17), indicate the lessons one may draw from the Jia Family story; some poems, like the chrysanthemum poems by Lin Daiyu (525-28), reveal the characters' personalities; some poems, like those made by the narrator at the end of some chapters such as Chapter 5 (91), invite

the reader to step out of the narration and apprehend the scenes in the poet's eye; and some poems convey the emotions and feelings whose intensity is hard to capture through mere narration. As we have learned in discussing Bakhtin's narrative theory, one of the advantages the novel has over other literary genres is that it is capable of integrating other literary genres into itself. The example of the Dream of the Red Chamber tells us that the integration of various genres is not simply a display of juxtaposition. The function of poetry in the narrative facilitates the application of the features inherent in the narrative.

Another characteristic in the organization of the novel related to the stress on individual scenes or chapters is the seeming looseness in the structure of the storytelling. As Wu Shih-Ch'ang observes, "There are a number of gaps between stories at the end of one chapter and the beginning of another; some of them are quite conspicuous" (198). According to his study, in the first eighty chapters (in the 1760 version, *gengchenben* 庚辰本 the most reliable version), there are six such gaps (159). Some gaps, in his opinion, are "perhaps deliberately left there by the author" (198). This purposeful looseness in the structure of narrative is the feature that we may find not only in this work, but also in other masterworks of the Chinese novel. To seal the gaps with detailed descriptions, Wu suggests, is evidence of a less artistic hand (Ibid.). I believe that Wu's argument has a point. The structure of a novel reflects the novelist's cast of mind and outlook on the nature of narrative. As in other Chinese arts such as painting and poetry, the appreciation of a novel leans heavily on the reader's faculty of association. The synecdochic nature and allusiveness of the Chinese language, as we have observed, contribute to this aesthetic trend. Besides, as Cao Xueqin himself

maintains, what concerns him is not the stories themselves, but their essential substances (事體情理, 5). To break the reader's concentration and draw his or her attention away from the linear line of storytelling with intended gaps is a possible way to encourage his or her imagination to associate the ongoing story with other episodes, events or scenes that are not directly related in the story line. Since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), commentators on novels have constantly made analogies between the art of painting and the arrangement of plot. The words they employ to visualize the principles of this arrangement often involve the movement of endless and entangled circling. As the authors of the *Zhiyan* 脂硯 commentary propose, the textual arrangement of the Dream of the Red Chamber can indeed be likened to the circling of a ring, and one can hardly find where is the beginning or where is the end. The whole body is woven by thousands of entwined threads, and all threads are twisted into various circles spiraling into different directions (see Zhou Ruchang, 498, 593). Within this conceptual framework, the stories in the novel lead the reader to certain points, and the connections among these points sometimes are left absent, waiting for the reader's imagination to complete. The realization of the essential substance often emerges in the territory where language yields its sovereignty to imagination, a territory it has helped to bring into being but lacks the capacity to enter.

Since a narrative can only deal with a particular part of reality, any narrative's ending can only be a relative ending. Since every particular scene or chapter is an individual part of the language reality circumscribed by the textual enclosure of the narrative, it must have various ways to connect to the meaning that cannot reach its full exposure unless we have the ending

of the narrative. The potential of language enriches the interplay between the plot as the whole that comprises the parts and the individual scenes as the parts that generate the whole. As a sophisticated product of language, narrative itself is an attempt to compensate for language's internal drive for linearization.

4. Genre: the Trajectory of Narrative Interpretation

The Power of Genre and the Interpretation of Narrative

Narrative is a substantiation of language: it is a reality (the language reality);[57] the life manifested in the story is the substance of narrative: it is also a reality (the prosaic reality). For both the author and the reader genre is the trajectory across the border between these two kinds of reality. This chapter discusses some functions genre performs while facilitating the act of interpreting narrative.

Taking issue openly with genre is a persistent effort of recent criticism. This motivational foundation for the campaign is to break what Heather Bubrow calls "the conventional wisdom about genre" (113). For example, Alastair Fowler proposes that to challenge the traditional notion of genre is to view genre as a channel of communication instead of, as we used to believe, merely a means of classification (20). Lauro Martines advocates that changes of genre embody changes in the social milieu, and a decline or a change in genre is "necessarily keyed to social change" (15). Still, there are some critics insisting on the significance of genre in interpreting literary works. Hans Robert Jauss, for instance, maintains that genre is a part of the horizon of the interpretative intention (22). While undertaking the job of defining literature, Kenneth Rexroth in the Encyclopedia Britannica maintains that "critics have invented a variety of systems for treating literature as a

[57] "Reality" is admittedly a ambiguous term. Here, I use this term simply in the sense of "things that are there." This is the medieval sense of the *realium*. It is also the etymological sense of reality as the *res* or *thing*.

collection of genres" (93). Adena Rosmarin further observes that in the wake of deconstruction, having a proper conception of genre is a way to bring power to the critical explanation (ix). Taken these arguments into consideration, it is reasonable to say that in reading and interpreting a literary work, genre is the cognitive model for the reader and the power it has over the reader's mind is not solely generated by the text.

The relationship between genre and text is the question we have to face while examining the interpretive functions of genre. Genre may function as a codifying system for the author when he or she is composing a text; it may also function as an interpretive strategy for the reader when he or she is interpreting a text. These two functions are closely related. Let us first take a brief look at Tzvetan Todorov and Jonathan Culler's theories about the notion of genre, as they give us a succinct account of each of these two functions respectively.

In Genres in Discourse Todorov maintains that literature is a system of fiction. This system is made of discourses. A discourse is an uttered sentence. What transforms language into discourse is the adopted forms. These forms are codified in a given sociocultural context. These codified forms are genres. Generic forms impose an obligatory bond on optional verbal properties, transforming them from the level of language to the level of discourse. The sociocultural implication substantiates itself essentially through the choices of generic forms. "The literary genres, indeed, are nothing but such choices among discursive possibilities, choices that a given society has made conventional" (10). "The genres of discourse," therefore, "depend quite as much on a society's linguistic raw material as on its historically circumscribed

ideology" (Ibid.). Todorov argues that language itself does not have any ideological meaning. It is the structural form that endows the linguistic raw material with ideological denotations and connotations. "A genre," he insists, "whether literary or not, is nothing other than the codification of discursive properties" (18). Literary competence thereby lies in the capability of deciphering the message which is generically codified.

Culler approaches the same issue from the opposite end. Culler considers genre to be a set of expectations. These expectations substantiate themselves in the notions of tradition. The notions of tradition guide reading and writing. He stresses the idea that generic models should be considered an array of reading strategies, suggesting that genre is basically a category of interpretation. "Instead of articulations of a logical space in which literary works can be placed, according to the qualities they manifest, genres are in effect treated as models that function within a particular culture to generate readings" (292). In Culler's argument, genres are models of contemporary intelligibility that disrupt historical chains. They are structural models that determine the interpretation and suffuse our pedagogy. In sum, the application of generic concepts is a process of institutionalization.[58]

Although Todorov and Culler discuss the notion of genre with different emphases (the former stresses on the composition of literary works, the latter on the interpretation), their postulates at root are both built on the same

[58] Robert Hodge has also expressed the similar opinion. In his Literature as Discourse, a book advocating the approach of social semiotics, he postulates that texts are material, whereas genres are constructs and projections. Genres are invisible but capable of constraining or engendering meaning. Hodge suggests that literary study is built on a complex interplay of genres. As genres control the interpretation of texts, "it is these categories rather than individual texts which can seem decisive for the study of social meaning" (27).

assumption: genres are the forms or models that codify certain messages. These messages are largely related to social conventions or to the prevalent intelligibility.

Although theories of genre are not in short supply, the question of how genre functions as the central link connecting the author and the reader conventionally as well as form and content intelligibly, by and large, still remains a contested question. Generic conception is a formative force in creating a literary mood, which distinguishes literature from other parts of our existing world. However, genre is not solely the generic expectation rooted in the author's or the reader's minds. As Bakhtin observes, although genre is the form that makes an utterance meaningful, it itself is "determined by the subject matter, goal, and situation of the utterance" (Speech Genres 152). The conception of genre manifests itself in such generic entities as listed by Fowler under the rubric of "kind" or "generic repertoire" (56).[59] These generic entities aren't pigeonholes which the reader strategically takes up regardless of the text itself. Instead, they are the properties which the text formally bears. At any rate, the notion of genre implies the need for an act of interpretation in order to connect the author's intention with the reader's understanding around the crux of the text.

Narrative is an art of language. On the one hand, it employs language to construct an intended world which otherwise could not be constructed. On the

[59] Fowler explains that the term "kind" he employs is equivalent to "historical genre" (56). The features he lists in the ever-renewable generic repertoire include the followings: representational aspect (such as narrative, dramatic or discursive), external structure, metrical structure, size, scale, subject, generic values, mood (emotional coloration), occasion, attitude, setting (of narrative kinds), character, structure of action, style, and the reader's task (60-73).

other hand, as we have observed in the last chapter, narrative has an avowed interest in the deeply ingrained formal structures of language, such as syntactic patterns, rhetorical devices, and some intrinsic organizational principles, that endow works of language with special values. There are some particular relationships between the accentuation of the intended meaning and the formalization of the rhetorical features. Genres are the models that stratify certain types of these relationships. These generic models are normative. To identify a work as a satire or an allegory is to engage one's interpretation with the implication historically established. In this sense, genre also stands as a dialogue between the form and the content.

In Chinese, the counterpart of the word "genre" literally means "text body" (*wenti*文體). Actually, just as every newly-born infant must have his or her gender identity, every literary work must bear certain generic classification. To choose a particular genre is to adopt a particular communicative way to articulate the writer's intentional feeling. A feeling without being articulated in language, as Philip Roth's hero Neil in Good By Columbus tells us, can hardly be called a feeling.[60] And the language articulation in literature is always genre-bounded. A suitable generic form can help the writer shape the edge of the feeling and bring it into the world of literature. A literary work is accented by the writer's particular way of handling things. For instance, in the field of prose, whether we follow the current initiated by Montaigne to convey a personal reflection on a subject, or the current derived from Bacon to enlighten readers by elaborating human

[60] Neil says, "Actually we did not have the feelings we said we had until we spoke them--at least I didn't; to phrase them was to invent them and own them" (13).

truth, there is always a strong personal motive to influence or persuade readers of a viewpoint which the author passionately favors. Writers consistently seek for the right form to convey the intended meaning most efficiently. Historically, the tension between the interest in form and the interest in content forced writers and critics to establish certain relatively stable patterns between the external rhetorical types and the internal expressive tones. These patterns are genres. In the third century the Chinese critic Lu Ji 陸機 (A.D. 261-301) already noticed the correspondence between certain types of values and certain generic forms. In *Wen Fu* 文賦 (Rhapsody on Literature) he points out, "Lyric Poetry (*shi* 詩) springs from emotions and is lovely and exquisite; The Rhapsody (*fu* 賦) gives form to the object, and is limpid and clear ... The Dirge (*lei* 誄) wrenches the heart and is mournful and sad ... The Discourse (*shuo* 說) dazzles and glitters, but is cunning and deceitful" (2). Over generations, each genre has acquired a particular accent within itself. The particular accent in turn endows new works in the same genre with an overall mood. In this sense, it requires no special effort to agree with Rosalie Colie that the meaning of a literary work partly consists in its "inevitable kind-ness" (128).

Genre isn't the thing that merely spices a literary work up. "A literary genre," Bakhtin maintains, "by its very nature, reflects the most stable, 'eternal' tendencies in literature's development" (Problems 106). On the one hand, a particular genre exerts a formative power which regulates the writer's imagination, and is able to retain the conventional force to transform the daily reality into the language reality. On the other hand, a specific genre activates the reader's imagination and expectations toward a particular direction, and casts a certain attitude toward the speculative world in the

reader's mind. Genres are hard-won models of comprehension shared by both the writer and the reader. Using this basic understanding of genre, we now are going to focus on its power upon the interpretation.

There seems to be an eternal discrepancy between the author's intention and the reader's interpretation. However, as P. D. Juhl insists, the reader's interpretation cannot totally elude the author's intention (16, 297). If there is a logical connection between the author's intention and the reader's interpretation, genre is certainly the ground for this connection. There is a conceivable difference between reading Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past as an autobiography and reading it as a novel, or between reading Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude as mythology and as a novel. Although the lines among genres are frequently blurred, the interpretation of a literary work is always in accordance with whatever generic norm the reader has in mind during a particular reading. Or, as Hirsch puts it, "all understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound" (76). The interplay of different genres in a particular work may engender the otherwise-absent meaning. However, as Fowler argues, "a difficult or innovative or generically complex work may have to secure its generic context with many allusions" (90). Before there is an interplay, each of the participants must have agreed on its conceived generic identity to make the interaction possible.

In discussing Bakhtin's persistent attention to the generic pluralism of the novel, Claudio Guillen makes an insightful remark. "What characterizes Bakhtin's view," Guillen tells us, "is not merely the amplitude that he concedes to such diversity, but also the inclination to find something like an opening to

the external and real world in it, a gateway for forms that are not considered literature, or at least not cultivated literature" (135). If we relate the function of genre to the interpretation of narrative, Guillen's comment may give us two things to think about. First, is it true that genre is the gateway that connects the reader's interpretation of a literary work (the language reality) to the external world (the prosaic reality)? If so, then, second, is this the only way (or the normative way) for the concept of genre to introduce the "forms that are not considered literature, or at least not cultivated literature" into the literary text, in order to cross the border between the language reality and the prosaic reality? My answers to the first question is positive, but is negative to the second. To integrate the forms of nonliterary works, as Bakhtin insists, is a generic characteristic of the novel. It offers a direct way to connect to the external world. However, this is not necessarily the normative way, for if it is, those literary works that do not have this advantage would thereby be kept from the reach of reality. Genre, as Derrida puts it, is the formless form that remains invisible ("Law of Genre" 213). In order to connect the language reality to the prosaic reality, in narrative as well as in other literary genres, the conception of genre functions in a way that demands further consideration.

I neither intend to nor can make an exhaustive list of the generic characteristics of narrative. Nor I am going to speculate on what characteristics should be considered the characteristics of narrative. In this chapter, what I am going to do is limit the discussion to the range of the generic characteristics attributed to narrative either by common recognition or by my previous discussions. Instead of the question of <u>what</u> are the generic characteristics of narrative, in the following discussion, I intend to consider

how the concept of genre performs its functions in the interpretation of narrative.

Interpreting is an act. It is a practice of tentative but incessant efforts to translate what language embodies in a text into another text, within the conceptual framework consolidated in contemporary life. To put it differently, it is an undertaking to integrate the language reality into the prosaic reality through adding a new layer to the language reality. Now, there is a related question. Is there an ontological reason for the language reality to be on a parity with the prosaic reality, or, is the language reality merely a substitute for the prosaic reality in its endless array to approach the never-to-be-reached goal? Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground, for instance, is of course a vivid portrait of Russian society at that time.[61] However, does the endurance of its value lie just in the vividness with which the author has described a society that enslaved, impoverished, and degraded its own people?

The assimilation of the language reality into the prosaic reality is not so contingent as is commonly presumed. In Mimesis as Make-Believe, Kendall Walton gives us a thoughtful illustration. We all know that there is no King Lear and that Shakespeare's play is mere fiction, however, if we are asked whether there is Lear as the character and other fictional things such as dragons and fairies, "the answer first on our lips is that indeed there are" (385). We even know for certain that Lear has three daughters. This certainty is based on our intuition that we acknowledge the trueness of both the language reality and the prosaic reality. "Such are the conflicting intuitions of which the problem of the ontological status of fictional entities is born"

[61] The work was published in 1864.

(Ibid.). Walton believes that this intuitive duality is cultivated through constant manifestations of make-believe.[62] Make-believe is an overlooked or underemphasized element that "lies at the heart of the institution" (390). Therefore, it is no problem perceiving Anna Karenina in a more intimate way than one knows the girl next door; rather, it is he question is how to explain this dual intuitive reality. I believe that to this question the concept of genre can at least provide us with part of the answer.

Genres are not only "frames of acceptance," as Kenneth Burke suggests (43), but also models of a certain existence: the existence of literary works. Without the concept of genre, there would not be any literature. Stanley Fish repeatedly informs us of what a dramatical difference it makes between when students read a verbal expression as a poem and when they read it merely as a sequence of sentences (Is There a Text 355). What steers the reader's imagination toward the direction of literary reading is not the initial intention to interpret the work as a poem, but the generic feature the text intrinsically bears. The value of Tolstoy's War and Peace essentially lies in the fact that it is a novel. We read it as a first-rate novel and may learn history from it, but could hardly consider it even a second-rate work if we categorized it as a history book. Language reality is a reality that exists within the structure of generic models. Just as being shortsighted distorts our perception of reality, an improper notion of genre prevents us from perceiving a literary work as it is intended to be read. To read The Iliad as a play or Four Quartets as a novel would be innovative, but what one would thus be reading would not be Homer's Iliad or T.S Eliot or Four Quartets. In order to approach the language reality,

[62] In Walton's definition, make-believe is mimesis and mimesis is fiction (1-3).

we need not only literacy, but also the proper knowledge of genre. For it is only genre that structurally supports the existence of the language reality.

The first step in interpreting a narrative is to know that it is a narrative. As Heather Dubrow writes, "our knowledge of the generic contract allows us to maintain the appropriate mood and to concentrate on what is most significant about the work" (32). As a generic indicator, a simple phrase like "once upon time" switches the mode of receiving data in the reader's mind, permitting the person to accept the existence of the characters and the logic of their behaviors. The acquisition of generic knowledge may be an unconscious process, accumulated through connected readings. However, classifying a work encountered in the reader's mind, as Paul Hernadi suggests, is intrinsically related to the "advanced insight" provided by genre criticism (152). For instance, if readers consider the interplay of the relationships among narrator, author and characters to be one of narrative's generic characteristics, while recognizing a work as a narrative, they are reminded of this interplay by their "knowledge of the generic contract." No one can gain access to the language reality unless he or she has adequate knowledge of relevant genres.

The concept of "generic contract" is an interesting one. It is commonly assumed that genre is a concept built on the notion of convention, and that convention is a tacit agreement between author and reader. However, one may question this postulate on these grounds: since authors usually do not know most of their readers personally, how can this contractual agreement be ratified by authors and readers? In discussing the role convention plays in our use of language, David Lewis challenges the notion that convention is based on agreement. He suggests that tacit conventions are not necessarily

created by agreement (3). He goes back to what David Hume proposes in A Treatise of Human Nature that convention is comprised of the rules regulating the manners of a given society through an appeal to common interests (4), and postulates his own definition. Here is the short form of Lewis's own definition: a convention is a regularity in the behavior among members of a population when they are agents in a recurrent situation (78).[63] I am interested in this definition because of two points it raises. First, it defines convention as a regularity, and regularity is a concept that involves the constant actions of referring by the mutually unknown parties. Regularity t is not an agreement, as agreement is the concept that implies an explicit settlement between members who already know their common interests. Secondly, this definition suggests that all members involved in observing a convention are agents. Whether in agreement or not, they act upon the regularity, and may offer their own contributions to the metamorphosis of a given convention while molding their behavior according to the convention.

Genre is a system that operates on the grounds of convention. Now, if we apply the aforesaid points concerning convention to our understanding of genre, especially its function in interpretation, then one thing we can understand better is that in interpreting a work, the reader is entitled to exploit the generic features regardless of whether the author has intentionally put them into play or not. Both the author and the reader make their "generic contract" with the normative regularity, but not merely with each other. The normative regularity emanates from the accumulation of works of the same kind. It is certainly possible that the regularity comprises

[63] I have left out the five conditions Lewis poses as the prerequisites of this definition (78-79).

some generic features which an individual writer might have ignored even though he or she has adopted a particular generic form. Since the reader's interpretation acts upon this regularity, it is also certainly possible to use the generic knowledge learned from other works from the same generic category, to explicate the meaning engendered by the generic features whose power the author might not be aware of. For instance, since we have learned the importance of point of view in narrative through its demonstration in Henry James's novels, we may apply this knowledge to the interpretation of Fielding's or Defoe's novels, even if the author did not purposely depend on this narrative strategy. The author chooses a generic form that is suitable for the subject matter, and consolidates the message hidden in the generic form in writing the intended work in the chosen form. Besides, acting upon the regularity, the work may not only confirm the regularity, but also add a new dimension to it. By interpreting a particular work through its particular generic classification, the reader's conception of this particular genre may be enriched by the new creation. The author's notion of this genre may not be full-fledged. Since he or she wrote in this genre, the generic form may endow the work with the implications which have been fully developed in other works of the same kind and well established in the reader's mind. This is the generic amendment to the interpretation of an individual work. When a novel gives the reader enough indications to identify it as a gothic novel, the reader expects to find a brooding atmosphere of gloom or terror, uncanny and spooky happenings, a haunted house, and aberrant psychological states, etc. As M. H. Abrams points out, these generic expectations were first based on Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto, a Gothic Story, and then strengthened and enriched

by the works written in this category over a successive hundred year period. These expectations, in turn, certainly enhance our readings of such works as E. T. A. Hoffman's tales of terror (72).

The generic amendment to the interpretation of an individual work may also cross cultural borders. Knowledge of the works of a different literature inspires us to explore the generic potential in the interpretation of a same-kind work. In the case of narrative, due to the differences of cultural settings, some generic features enjoy a fuller range of development in a particular literature than in others, such as, as we have observed in the preceding discussions, the use of point of view in the literature of English and the diminished stress on the ending in the literature of Chinese. However, this relative degree of emphasis does not mean that point of view is a generic property exclusively belonging to the literature in the West, or that the de-emphasis on the ending is a feature peculiar to the literature in the East. All literatures exhibit certain aspects of these generic possibilities. Sometimes these occurrences coincide; sometimes they do not. If the circumstances have changed, a narrative may turn away from its own tradition, and appeal to the generic characteristics that have particularly asserted themselves in other literatures. For instance, a climactic ending does not need to be the central concern of a narrative. This is the case we have seen in the experience of Chinese literature. In the twentieth century, Western writers also came to the same conclusion but for a different reason. In The Turn of the Novel, Alan Friedman locates the first part of the twentieth century as the turning point where the trend of the novel in the West transformed itself from the "closed novel" to the "open novel." The reason he offers for this shift is that earlier fiction attested to the necessity, the coherence and the dignity, "of achieving a

closed ethical experience in the course of life," whereas modern fiction attests to the reverse situation of "an open experience" (xv). Therefore, the ending in the novel is not as crucial as it was before. In the West, this is a generic innovation, demanded by change in the social milieu and in the subject matter. However, given the Chinese experience, it is not difficult to understand that this innovation is not an abnormal break from past generic forms of the novel, but rather an exploitation of the generic potentiality which has not been fully developed in this Western culture.

Genre is the trajectory between the language reality and the prosaic reality. The conception of a literary genre itself offers an access to the external world. It reminds readers of how language substantiates the world in a particular way, and thus helps them "maintain the appropriate mood and to concentrate on what is most significant about the work" (Dubrow 32). Hawthorne's Preface to The House of the Seven Gables is an instructive example, as it shows a strong awareness of the power of genre. Hawthorne makes a strenuous effort to help the reader draw a line between the genre of romance and the genre of the novel, maintaining that the former aims at the truth of the human heart and the latter a fidelity to the probable and ordinary course (351). In explaining what genre he has chosen, Hawthorne formulates the path for navigating between the reality in his novel and the reality that substantiates the truth of the human heart, while asking readers to give their imaginations free rein to search for the truth rather than for mere facts. The generic norm of romance encompasses a particular way in which the two realities interact with each other.

Fowler maintains that his central idea in Kinds of Literature is that

genre is "a communication system" (257). Related to this idea he postulates three ways as the major functions genre performs in the reception of a literary work: construction, interpretation and evaluation (Ibid.). Thus, the first phase of the interpreting act is the process of "generic recognition," in which readers approach and rebuild the "original work" as closely as the author saw it. This reconstructed version of the original work becomes the object for further interpretation and evaluation. "The best readers find criticism effective when it is based on construction faithful to the original: only then will it really work. In principle, the critic aims at reconstructing every aspect in this way" (263). Therefore, "communication" for Fowler means the act of making oneself known to others, or understanding the other with the least distortion. And genre is what makes the interchange possible. Fowler offers a well-formulated interpretive model. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the role genre is assigned to play in it is not yet fully defined.

I agree with Fowler that the major function of genre is to communicate. However, I prefer to see communication as an act to connect rather than to make oneself well known or to understand others better. As we have seen in the previous discussion, without the generic form, there can never be an "original" work. And, as soon as the author puts his or her feelings, thoughts and experiences into a particular generic form, the work becomes exactly the work we are perceiving. Thus, the concept of an "original work" is an unworkable concept if "original" means to deprive a work of its generic formulation. Both the author and the reader are connected to the text which intrinsically bears a particular generic form. The fact of belonging to a particular genre infers that the reader's interpretation may exceed the the author's original intended message. These interpretive and receptive

implications, as Fowler himself well argues, have been socially, culturally and historically stratified in the concept of genre. Whether a literary work should be understood in the way the author intended is a longstanding controversy. To me, the text is the object of the reader's interpretation and evaluation, and a text may well comprise some elements which go beyond the author's original plan, such as the historically-accumulated generic message. The text is the reality that actually affects the reader. If a text bears some messages which were not fully explicated by the author, these are still part of the interpretive object, since these do affect the reader's mind.

Contrary to the common assumption as articulated by Christine Brooke-Rose (3-11), the relationship between the world substantiated in a narrative and the world from which the narrative emanated is not natural at all. This relationship is never as simple as the relationship between an object's reflection in the mirror and the object itself. Every attempt in language to describe the world has to adopt a generic form to materialize itself. Genres are not the mental structures that underlie human discourse. Rather, these are the structures of the language world that render descriptions of the prosaic world with implications one cannot find in the world itself, e.g., the conceivable wit in irony. Therefore, if we try to identify the world substantiated in a narrative as a representation of the world from which the narrative emanates, it is only natural to find unnaturalness in its way of representation, as it normatively imposes generic models upon the writer's experience.

However, interpreting a narrative is not a reverse process of creating a narrative. In other words, it is not a process of purifying the opacity caused

by the generic implication in order to restore the originality of the world. The interpretation of a narrative is an explication of the language world which is enhanced by the generic implication. Sustaining the properties of language, including its generic structures, is an attribute of literature. For instance, the distance between the author and narrator frees the narrative from being bound to the author's direct experience, and creates a vantage point that grants a scope to the interaction of different experiences and a battlefield for the conflicting viewpoints.[64] This generic structure cannot be taken apart without damaging the values it upholds. The concept of genre is not a code and the interpretation of narrative is not a process of decoding. For a code itself does not have any meaning and is doomed to be abandoned after the process of decoding is complete.

To a certain extent, the choice of genre is not an rhetorical but a thematic decision. Don Quixote begins its life as a parody of popular literature and ends up being the first modern novel. The complexity of the aim "to overthrow that ill-compiled machine of books of chivalry" (Cervantes 12) simply denies the margin of the possibilities promised by any other genre. Ian Watt tells us that in the rise of the novel in eighteenth-century England, "Defoe, Richardson and Fielding do not in the usual sense constitute a literary school," and "their works show so little sign of mutual influence" (9). Richardson and Fielding saw themselves involved in "a break with the old-fashioned romances," but neither of them had a clear idea about the

[64] The insistence on the presence of the narrator in the interpretation of a narrative may be justified by the phenomenon indicated by Harry Shaw. He observes that firm, self-evident distinctions about the narrator's nature and presence "threaten to come unstuck, especially when they have proved their usefulness over time" (96).

characteristics which the new genre should have (10).[65] To put it differently, the establishment of a genre is driven by socially-formed internal needs rather than by aesthetic-literary trends. To me, the flourishing of the novel in the twentieth century indicates the resistance to a single voice, an isolated theme and a dogmatic reason, and the struggle to maintain the diversity of individual voices in the orchestrated effort to grasp an ever-moving and multifaceted reality. As Bakhtin postulates, one of the generic features of the novel is to allow for the diversity of individual voices, demanding a full understanding only after grasping the distinct implication of each discourse involved (Dialogic Imagination 262). The novel adheres to this norm. This hard-won model of comprehension is one of the major contributions which the novel as a genre has made to the modern intelligibility. The generic form first and foremost substantiates the socially-formed internal drive. Keeping this in mind will certainly help us put two and two together.

To interpret is an act. What make it meaningful is not only the interpretation of the text, but also the act of interpreting itself. A text is a piece of the language reality. An interpretation is not merely an effort to explicate the text as objectively as possible. It is also an attempt to express or confirm a certain attitude or perspective in the way of looking at this institutionalized reality. As Mary Jacobus explains in her discussion of feminist criticism, what is important is not merely the literary inheritance, but, as Virginia Woolf proposes, the difference of view, and difference of standard (49). Since generic forms of literary works carry conceivable

[65] Watt writes, "our usage of the term 'novel' was not fully established until the end of the eighteenth century" (10).

attitudes and perspectives within themselves, it is not uncommon that a certain type of criticism is particularly interested in a certain literary genre, such as Paul de Man's interest in allegory. In the interpretation of narrative, to pay attention to the diversity of individual voices indicates abandoning the habit to interpret the diversified world in a single voice. A misinterpretation of the message carried by a particular generic form is also an indication of the interpreter's hidden intention.

Genre is a system that endows the language reality with the power which language itself lacks. In discussing Rousseau's pessimistic destruction of language, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg maintain that a new pattern of narrative cannot be typical unless it has "some formulation, some mold," and that "the new will extend beyond the power of language to formulate it" (158). Therefore, it is not only necessary but possible for a narrative to overcome the limits set up by the nature of language in such a way as to bring the power of genre into play. Since language is not the only tool in the critical repertoire, an interpretation cannot be a sound one if it merely dwells on language itself. As I mentioned above, genre is not the only thing that spices up a narrative. Jauss has a point when he questions Formalist theory and opposes the unilinear model of the evolution of literary genres and forms (107). He maintains that the theory of literary genres should not remain within "the structure of self-enclosed histories of genres," without considering "the possibility of a historical systematic" (95). As the result of the historical process, generic structures have indeed acquired a power of their own. They add power to the language reality while upholding its particular manifestations.

Narrative is narrative of events; narrative is also, as Genette proposes

(169), narrative of speeches. Narrative is the narration of language, since it is the repeated exercise of using language in its full-fledged nature; narrative is also the narration of genre, since each instance of narrative is a manifestation of the inherent features of this genre. To interpret a narrative is not merely to restore narrated events or to rehearse narrated speeches. It is, more significantly, to reveal the human sensitivity and intelligibility in apprehending the events and speeches, the sensitivity and intelligibility which have been substantiated in the creation of language. Whether as the conventional model for the formation of a verbal expression, or as the methodological strategy for its interpretation, the concept of genre can perform its function only because genre is the structural entity for the language reality. Within this structure, the components of language have acquired a significance which they otherwise would not have. Genre is the path leading both the author and the reader into the language reality, in which authors and generations of readers connect together through a common interest in the same literary works. Genre is also the path leading the reader back into the prosaic reality, with a enlightened mind and inspired spirit. Without genre, the communication between the language reality and the prosaic reality is impossible.

A narrative is a story delineated by a narrator. In Chapter 2 we have already discussed how the narrator's perspective is cast. In the following two sections, I will mainly discuss two aspects concerning the part of "story," namely, plot and fragmentarity. Both of these functions are rooted in the reader's generic expectations of narrative.

Plot and the Ordering of a Narrative: Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia"

Plot is the arrangement of narrated events or performed actions. As a generic property, it does not exclusively belong to narrative. Drama and film rely even more on the logic and dynamic of plotting to absorb the audience's attention. However, if we consider narrative as it has been so far commonly understood, it is only justifiable to say that plot is an essential element of a narrative. A novelist may declare that a good plot is the most insignificant part of a tale (Trollope 247); but a narrative can hardly approach the reader's understanding without arousing the expectation of the craft of plotting. As a counterbalancing effort, the tendency of de-plotting stories in the works of contemporary writers, by and large, still acts upon the reader's assumption that there should be a plotted story for the framework of reading, even though the completion of the story demands the reader's participation.

Since E. M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel, it is commonly accepted that there is a distinction between a story and a plot. Forster postulates:

> We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. "The king died and then the queen died," is a story. "The king died, and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. ... If it is a story we say "and then?" If it is in a plot we ask "why?" That is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel. (130)

Besides curiosity, Forster maintains, "a plot demands intelligence and memory also" (131). Therefore, the essence of a plot is the coincidence of the time-

sequence and causality. This coincidence itself contains a mystery, as "mystery is essential to a plot" (132). And the appreciation of mystery requires intelligence. Thus, besides the satisfaction of curiosity, the pleasure of reading a plot also arises from the exercise of intelligence.

Temporality is the dominant force in both story and plot. Each involves an unfolding of actions within the time-sequence. Elizabeth Dipple suggests that the interest in what happens next is something primordial (2). The shaping and controlling power of temporality emanates from the fact that "the flux of time and temporality have been with us since the garland of roses first faded in Adam's hand" (50). However, since a plot is a designed "arrangement"[66] which is meant to reflect the causality working behind the time-bounded sequence of actions, the making of a plot is rooted in the conviction that the manifestation of temporality has its intrinsic association with the logic of revealing the essence of the development of actions.

To plot is a way to conclude a story. Plot circumscribes the meaning of the story. It determines the beginning and the ending of the time period in which actions have taken place, and delineates the relationships among actions in the flux of time. In Reading for the Plot Peter Brooks postulates, "plot is the principal ordering force of those meanings that we try to wrest from human temporality"; "it is the design and intention of narrative" (xi). Whether or not this time-bound arrangement of actions is capable of conveying the intended meaning is a question raised by both critics and novelists. "In the novel," E. M. Forster argues, "all human happiness and

[66] Dipple also proposes that a plot is an arrangement. She writes, "Plot is the arrangement of action; action progresses through the indispensable medium of time from which it derives all of its modifying vocabularies" (43).

misery does not take the form of action, it seeks means of expression other than through the plot, it must not be rigidly canalized" (142). Quite a few contemporary writers aim to create the sense of timelessness in their narrative works. However, under the spell of convention, the anticipation of seeing a plot as the structural underpinning of the narrative still has its place in the reader's consciousness, even though to some readers a plot is no longer expected to have the primary energy supposedly engendered from its parallelism with the imitated life.

An arrangement is a manipulation. The notion of plot introduces the existence of the author into the reader's consciousness. The narrator is the witness and participant of the story, but not the manipulator of the plotting. The author controls the plot. This is the reason that I believe it is more proper to categorize the notions of plot and plotting under the rubric of genre. For genre is the contract signed by the reader with the author before he or she gets to know the narrator. Plotting is not merely the orderly presentation of characters and incidents. To a certain extent, plotting is a mode of thinking about and looking at the world. Joseph Conrad is the author to whom critics often refer when discussing the issue of plot. He declares that unlike history, fiction should not present itself through chronological documentation. He believes that "fiction is nearer truth," because fiction is "based on the reality of *forms* and observation of social phenomena" (87, italics is mine). Plot is a form that enables the author to organize his or her observations in a certain way. The habit of reading for a plotted story also regulates the reader's imagination in unplotting the story. Scholes and Kellogg maintain that plot is the indispensable skeleton that "provides the necessary clay into which life

may be breathed" (239). Walter Benjamin insists that to lose interest in storytelling is to lose the ability to exchange experience (83). However, plot also integrates the mental framework the author casts upon the storytelling. as plotting is the structuring form that, in addition to characters, incidents and the logic of temporality, substantiates within itself the author's understanding of social phenomena. This mental framework is in constant battle with the logic of temporality for the power of controlling. The scheme of plotting could be indeed arbitrary. For instance, Charles Dickens changed the ending of Great Expectations without changing anything else. The question we now are facing is not about arbitrariness. It is rather about the necessity and possibility of abandoning artificiality. Is it necessary to yield the controlling power of temporality to the framework of the author's mentality? If it is demanded, is it still possible to maintain the essence of storytelling in doing so?

As a generic property of narrative, the function of plot also leans on the way the reader conceives it. The reader may or may not reckon a plot as the ordering structure in organizing the reading experience. It does not totally depend on the author's intention. Dipple suggests that plot is a term that "establishes a liaison between reader and literary text, demanding that each reader comprehend the active principle which the fiction being considered creates" (67). And she is not alone in paying attention to the reader's participation. "It is the reader's inference of the predictive sequence," Cedric Watts writes, "which creates the sense of plot" (184). In Plot Snakes and the Dynamics of Narrative Experience, Allen Tilley observes, "Plot is an orderly process of change experienced by a reader who moves through a text" (2). To introduce the reading act into the concept of plot is significant, particularly

for our understanding of the interpretation of narrative.

If in drama and film we may define plot as the arrangement of actions, in a narrative, it would be more appropriate to define it as the arrangement of narrated events. Narrativity is a concept closely related to the concept of textuality. What makes plot in narrative unique is textuality. The essence of plot is temporality. In reading a narrative, the reader encounters two kinds of temporality. One is the temporality of related actions; the other is the temporality of the reading act. Unlike in drama and film where the time-sequence of observing and the time-sequence of performed actions are basically parallel, in narrative, both author and reader work on the discrepancy between the time-sequence of reading and the time-sequence of happening. In drama and film, what one sees next is not necessarily what happens next in the sequence of events, but is what happens next in terms of the actors' performances. In narrative, what one reads next could be neither the sequential events nor the sequential impression of visual images. Language is the vehicle that carries messages symbolically or synecdochically. The existence of the narrating text is independent from the existence of the narrated events and from the visual imageries. According to the study Elizabeth Belfiore has done in her Tragic Pleasures, in Aristotle's assumption, the pleasure one may extract from plot structure arises from its analogy to the soul of living things, since it is the working "organization of the events" (58). Now, even if we stay in this theoretical scope, in order to obtain the pleasure kindled by plot and plotting, one needs to find a principle that can orchestrate the rhythm of the reading act and the organization of the narrated events. As Brooks observes, plot is the force that leads the reader

forward (xiii). In reading a narrative, this movement leads the reader to the unfolding of actions as well as to the crossing of the text. The interplay of textual elements may inspire the reader to grasp the meaning that is not in the line of plotting. Intertexuality is one of the things textuality grants to the plot in narrative.

Another thing textuality grants to the plot in narrative is the spatial form. The existence of the text frees both the author and the reader from obedience to the immediate memory, and provides them with a latitude in choosing a spatial rather than temporal arrangement. The narrator can view events in different perspectives that are not necessarily connected to the unfolding of the time-sequence. The narration can maintain a zone in which different characters act upon the same event at the same time but in different scenes, thus freeing time. A narrative may even adopt the time-measurement of the narrator's stream-of-consciousness instead of the time-measurement of the developing events. If a plot means an arrangement of actions, in a narrative, the relationships of actions are not necessarily arranged in terms of temporality. In "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology," Jurij M. Lotman proposes that at the center of the cultural *massif* is a textual mechanism for engendering myths. The central myth-making mechanism of culture, in his opinion, is organized as a topological space (161, 173). The medium of time is indispensable for the progress of actions; whereas the medium of text is indispensable for the unfolding of narrated actions. Thus, the myth of plotting emanates not only from the coincidence of temporality and causality, as Forster suggests, but also from the mechanism of textuality. Eric Rabkin suggests that even disregarding the medium of text, if we understand that plotted events are the observed actions instead of actions

themselves, and that they are observable only through some point of view, then, it is justifiable to pay attention to the spatial form of a plot (99). In some contemporary novels, the writers purposely offer certain focal points to help the reader establish a new pattern of conceiving the narratives. Vladimir Nabokov, for example, in "On a Book Entitled Lolita" reminds readers that instead of the time-bound unfolding actions, he concentrates on some delightful images, such as Mr. Taxovich, or Lolita in slow motion advancing toward Humbert's gifts, or the tinkling sounds of the valley town coming up the mountain trail, etc. "These are the nerves of the novel. These are the secret points, the subliminal co-ordinates by means of which the book is plotted" (316). These images are the points on which the reader can build a rather spatial pattern in appreciating the plotting of the novel.

Now I will take as an example Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia," to examine the issues related to plot and plotting in narrative. There is a controversy over the function of plot in Poe's tales. Wallace Martin maintains that Poe is a follower of Aristotelian theory of plot, for Poe believes that short tale is a perfect narrative form to create a "unity of effect or impression" (Martin 82). On the other side, Robert Caserio tells us that Poe helps initiate a peculiarly American sense of plot. He distrusts plot but still plays with its factitious and fabricating power (81). The complexity of Poe's tales lends us an opportunity to inquire into the complexity of plot and plotting in narrative. And, "Ligeia,"as commonly acknowledged, is one of Poe's most complex stories.

"Ligeia" is a carefully-plotted story.[67] However, if a plot is designed to

[67] In Plots and Characters in the Fiction and Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe Robert Gale produces his summary of the plot in "Ligeia." If we consider plot the structure of actions, then Gale's summary can be outlined as the following:

achieve a particular emotional effect, what emotion Poe desires to evoke in the reader's mind through the perceiving of the ordered structure of actions is a question that still puzzles us. From the very beginning, Poe obviously intends to affect the reader's consciousness with the atmosphere commonly seen in the Gothic novel. Poe puts the beginning of the story in "some large old decaying city near the Rhine" (46), a setting in the German Gothic tradition, and then moves the scene to "one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England" (53), tracing the historical movement of Gothic literature from Germany to England. The Gothic setting is given by the association with the gloomy and terrifying atmosphere, the uncanny and macabre events, and the aberrant psychological state. However, whether Poe intends to write this story as another Gothic tale, or to utilize the Gothic effects as a components of plotting, remains an open question. Discussing "Ligeia," G. R. Thompson remarks that "Poe's Gothic tales contain telltale evidences for rational psychological explanation, yet rarely so obtrusive as to destroy the uncanny supernatural effect, though often the events are so bizarre and incongruous

> The narrator met beautiful and learned Ligeia. They married. She grew sick and died. The narrator was crushed, travels aimlessly a while, and then purchased an English abbey and remarried Rowena. Within two months Rowena grew sick and sank toward death. One night, the narrator was sitting up with Rowena. He felt an invisible object pass by, saw a shadow on the carpet, imagined a faint footstep near, and saw a few ruby drops falling in Rowena's wine. About midnight three nights later the narrator fancied that Rowena's shrouded corpse regaining its life. He was paralyzed by ineffable fancies and then saw Ligeia in the body. And the whole narration is related through the medium of the narrator's opium-inspired hallucination. (50)

On the other hand, like some other readers, Roy Basler in his well-known "The Interpretation of 'Ligeia,'" insists that "the hero has murdered Rowena in his maniacal attempt to restore Ligeia to life" (91).

that we cannot fully enjoy the 'luxury' of the Gothic terror" (77). In this story, the way the grotesque and supernatural elements take part in the narrator's psychic tug of war is part of plotting. For a start, at the very beginning of the story, they create the mood of suspense in the reader's mind.

For a novelist, plotting is an arrangement to show the understood relationships of the events. Plotting is a challenge which can hardly be avoided, even though a novelist may rather plot a story in the way that it surfaces as a plotless verbal expression. For the narrator, the story is the only means to convey what is meant to be conveyed fully to the audience. The way in which the reader conceives the told events captures the meaning which mere words are unable to grasp. In "Ligeia," the narrator repeatedly tells us that there are something in his mind whose comprehensibility is beyond the capacity of mere words. He needs the form of a story to preserve and convey the full potency he perceives in the haunting topic of Ligeia. It is hard to imagine a better way than the stunning ending for describing the mysterious power of beauty and intelligence by the image of Ligeia possesses over the narrator's mentality. The narrator tells that what he has found in Ligeia is something recognizable but which escapes the defining power of language (49). "Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow" (50). Words also fail to describe the state of his mind, such as horror and awe, "for which the language of mortality has no sufficiently energetic expression" (57). The verbal descriptions of characters and events are channeled through the plot of the story. The organization of the story connects the reading experience to the reader's experiences from other parts of life and his or her previous

readings in the literature of the same genre. The intensity of the narrator's passion gains its shape in the tragedy of Ligeia, as the melody inspired by Ligeia is composed by "assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known" (50). Ligeia's desire for life is too intense for the life itself. Therefore, "in death only, was I fully impressed with the strength of her affection" (Ibid.). In this manner, through the development of the plot and the enchanting mood of the Gothic setting, Ligeia's death and her reincarnation in Rowena's body reach the reader's mind by conveying the narrator's intense passion and Ligeia's ineffable desire for life.

A narration is alway tinged with the way the narrator looks at the happenings. In "Ligeia" the narrator openly concedes that the story is intimately entangled with his mental state. He tells us that the plot of the story is the principle on which his "memory" works (46). He lets the story develop in the order in which his mind registers the events unconsciously, believing that there is a mysterious link between the selection of his sub-consciousness and the "great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness" (Ibid.). There are two kinds of action. One is the characters' actions that contribute to the development of the incidents; the other is the action of the narrator's mental activity. These two types of action involve two different time zones. A great part of the mystery displayed in the story emanates from the conflict between these two time zones.

Temporality is the essence of a plot. To render an action objectively observable, the action has to be shown through the sequence of time. We will never know whether Ligeia is a real figure in the narrator's life or merely a figment of the narrator's wishful imagination, since, as the narrator admits,

everything he is telling us is what remains in his memory. In the tale, what distinguishes the indeed-happened incidents from the narrator's hallucinatory imagination is the time zone. The actions that are objectively observable occur in a coherent time-sequence, whereas the narrator's hallucinatory imagination exists in the temporary zone of a still moment.

Divided by Ligeia's death, there are different time-sequences for the reader's perception of Ligeia's existence. As Poe himself indicates, the first part of the story contains the "*gradual* perception" of Ligeia's living which the second part lacks (Letters 1:118, the author's italics).[68] At the time when the narrator first introduces Ligeia to the reader, he mentions that "long years" have elapsed since his first acquaintance with Ligeia. It is "by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive" that the image of Ligeia made its way into his heart (46). First Ligeia "became" the partner of his studies, and "finally" his wife (47). Before Ligeia dies, the narrator "at length recognized the principle of her longing" (50). "At high noon of the night in which she departed," Ligeia bade the narrator repeat her verses (51). And she dies at the particular moment ("now") when the narrator is finishing his recital (53). Her death is the result of the order that arranges things "undeviatingly" (Ibid.). "After a few months" since Ligeia's death, the narrator purchases the abbey in England (53). Then he marries Rowena. And there is "the unhallowed hours of the first month" of their marriage (54). In "the

[68] The letter is written on September 21, 1839, in answering Philip P. Cooke. The following is a longer quote. "The *gradual* perception of the fact that Ligeia lives again in the person of Rowena is a far loftier and more thrilling idea than the one I have embodied. It offers in my opinion, the widest possible scope to the imagination--it might even be rendered sublime. . . . I was forced to be content with a sudden half-consciousness, on the part of the narrator, that Ligeia stood before him" (author's italics).

commencement of the second month of the marriage" Rowena falls ill. She become "at length" convalescent, and "finally" well (55). Yet after "a brief period," she is sick again, and "never" recovers (Ibid.). "One night, near the closing in of September," while Rowena is acting particularly irritating, the narrator feels some palpable although invisible object passing lightly (55-56). Then the time-sequence of the narrated events is frozen. At this turning point, the narrator loses the notion of time by which to frame the story. All he can tell is that "it might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time" (56-57). The time measure of the outward events has been replaced by the time measure of the intervals between the narrator's mental activities. The span is much shortened, and the pace is much quickened. There is "a short period" in which he is trying to call back the hovering spirit; "an hour" before he is aware for second time of some vague sound; the suddenness with which he realizes the disappearance of the liveliness from the body. Then, "an instant afterward" he realized the icy chilliness (57-58). When he resumes the consciousness, there is the measurement of the running time; when he "sunk into visions of Ligeia" again, he loses the sense of time again (58). The narrator declares, there is "a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor of the figure, *rushing hurriedly through my brain,*" and "a mad disorder in my thoughts--a tumult unappeasable" (59, my italics). Before he hears the invisible presence, the incidents are related in accordance with the time-sequence we perceive in ordinary life. After this point, the story mainly happens in the time zone of the narrator's imagination. The grotesque effect of the horrifying ending partly results from the skillful interplay of the different time zones.

One of the characteristics of "Ligeia" concerning its time-sequence is the rhythmic interruptions of the still moments of the narrator's psychological activities. In these moments, the act of reading is continuing and the actions of plot are suspended. The frame of the narrator's mental state takes over the role played by the frame of the time-sequence. These breakages of the sequence of actions enhance the effects created by the plot through an interaction between the incidents on the one hand and the narrator's mental activities on the other. Joan Dayan suggests, "the unveiling of 'Ligeia,' in all its unintelligibility, takes place before a corpse of a narrator" (188). However, it seems to me that not being a corpse is a key to the success of the dramatic effect evoked by the unveiled plot, even though the narrator is physically staying put. The narrator tells us that while relating the story he finds himself "*upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember" (48, Poe's italics). The story thus moves back forth from the time-sequence in which the incidents are happening to the time zone in which the narrator is speculating. There are parallels between "length of years" and "reflection," "long intercourse" and "intensity in thought" (49), and "the night waned" and "a bosom full of bitter thought" (56). The narrator talks about "a moment of mental alienation" (53), "topics of deep moment" (53-54), and "a second thereafter" (56). A narrator is supposedly the one who should keep unfolding the story. Nevertheless, the narrator in this story indulges himself in the moments when his memory "flew back" (55). He is a drug-user, and opium plays different roles in his life before and after Ligeia's death. In the first part of the story, opium is the means to inspire and enhance his vision of Ligeia's beauty.[69] In the later part of the story, opium is the

means to help him isolate from the time flux in which actions are taking place, and sustain the time zone in which he is able to cherish his dream. Drug is the "shackles" by which he is "fettered" in a time zone alien to the time-sequence of actions (55). When he resumes the role of the narrator, he realizes that what happened in the other time zone were "absurdities" (53). When he steps back into the opium-fettered time zone, his "vivid imagination" starts over again (56). Poe's tales are celebrated for their poignant plotting. The example of "Ligeia" tells us that the success of a well-plotted story does not entirely rely on the plot.

Another central element of plotting, as mentioned above, is the coincidence of causality and temporality. Causality is a concept referring to something that has happened because of a particular circumstance. In "Ligeia" Poe illustrates that it is not necessary for plotting to concentrate on the effect of circumstance. Instead, plotting may have a different center of interest. Roy Basler maintains that in "Ligeia," the narrator's psycho-emotional experience "weaves the plot" (86). The shift of the center of interest is a way to incorporate the narrator's psychological mood into the plot. The narrator informs us that he does not need to know the paternal name of Ligeia to tell the story, for what inspires his imagination is the "sweet word" of "Ligeia" alone (47). The paternal name is only a connection to the circumstance of her being. "I but indistinctly recall the fact itself--what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it?" (Ibid.) He concedes that "a circumstance" is no rival of a "vivid

[69] The narrator recalls, "In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an *opium* dream--an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos" (47, my italics).

imagination" (56). Compared to the stability of his attention to the image of Ligeia, the atmosphere is always a rushing-away phenomenon (58-59). He is sitting in the "now," and the whole circumstance of the night just "had worn away" (58), totally indifferent to what is happening to him. The narrator informs us that circumstances eluded the grasp of his memory but not the memory of Ligeia (47). The motif of the story is not the drama of actions but "that spirit which is entitled Romance" (Ibid.). His fancy is heated by Ligeia's beauty and intelligence (48). In telling this story, he is still possessed of a passion to discover the profundity behind Ligeia's eyes (Ibid.). It is the narrator's mental activity rather than the logic of events that lies behind the plotting. The temptation of seeing Ligeia again is so strong that he himself is not certain whether Rowena's death was through his willing hand or from the disease. "Ligeia" is a plotted story. However, it tells us that if a plot is an arrangement of events, in a narrative these events are not necessarily outward actions.

The sense of moving-forward is one of the things a reader expects as a generic property of a plot. The textuality of narrative engages the moving sense not only with the narrated actions but also with the reading activity. In the text of "Ligeia," there is even a consistent mutual relevancy among those things that are there but quite irrelevant to the plot. The setting in the Rhine with its connection to the German Gothic tradition; the name of Ligeia with its reference to Virgil and Milton's works; Francis Bacon's discussion of beauty; the mythological figures and places such as Ashtophet, Apollo, Azrael, Delos and the valley of Nourjahad; the historical figures like Democritus; the quotation (perhaps made up by Poe himself) by Joseph Glanvill; the poem "The

Conqueror Worm"; the arabesque figures; the superstition of the Normans; the mention of the "phantasmagoric influence;" these details either have nothing to do with the development of the plot, or have meaning beyond the functions they perform in furthering the plot. By and large, they are not the elements of the plot but help the reader pave the way for comprehending the meaning revealed by the plot. On the one hand, as Leon Chai observes, they function as allegories that help Poe portray the narrator's passion in the relationship of the mind to its own desire (24). On the other hand, by bringing myth and history into the reader's consciousness, they stretch the reader's imagination beyond the limits of ordinariness and morality, preparing the reader for the grotesqueness of the plotted ending. The reader's mind is led by the advance of the plot. In the way of this advance, his or her mind is also alternately affected by the arrangement of the textual elements which do not contribute to the story directly but nevertheless create a psychological mood for receiving the story.

A text requires the act of reading. To read a text is a process that has the potential to deter the reader's attention from the linear structure constrained by the time-sequence of a plot. Eric Rabkin observes, "plot is diachronic, but reading balances this diachronic process with the continual creation of synchronic hypotheses" (87). In turn, an author, such as Poe in "Ligeia," may lean on the reading act to concoct a spatial form in the reader's mind for interpreting the plotted events.

The basic plot line of "Ligeia" is Ligeia-Rowena-Ligeia. The presence of Rowena results from the death of Ligeia, and the death of Rowena is the prerequisite for the restoration of Ligeia's life. The relationship between these two events is supposedly sequential. According to the plot, they could not

coexist. However, the narrator never lets the vision of Ligeia disappear from the reader's consciousness. There are some things in the text that are outside of the plotted actions but support the continuing existence of the vision of Ligeia, such as the power and mystery of the universe which are partly embodied by Ligeia's beauty and intelligence, the great will of God that asserts itself in the narrator's insatiable imagination, and even the money Ligeia brings to the narrator is "very far more than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals" (53). To cope with the "time-honored memories," the narrator confines himself in a chamber with Rowena. The physical confinement of the space actually enlarges the mental space in which Ligeia is still living. "My memory flew back, (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia" (55). Every item he minutely describes in the grotesque surrounding is a means to detach the reader from common sense and leads to the existence of a living dead person. The intensity of his recollections enhances the realness of Ligeia's existence. Within the space of the chamber the narrator is living with a retreating Rowena and an approaching Ligeia. He never gives up the hope that through his wild eagerness, solemn passion, and consuming ardor of longing for the departed, he can restore Ligeia to the pathway she had abandoned upon the earth (55). Whether or not Ligeia is in the chamber is not the question. The question is whether or not Ligeia should resume a physical form to incarnate her spiritual being. If it is indeed the narrator who poisoned Rowena, why couldn't he tolerate the coexistence of Ligeia and Rowena? If Rowena is loathed by the narrator for her earthliness, why should the narrator want to see the spirituality of Ligeia walking into the earthly form of Rowena. Questions like these may stem from the spatial structure of

the plot.

The interplay of the textual arrangement of verbal expressions and the sequence of actions steers us back to the question of the necessity of plot in narrative. In reading "Ligeia" we are prompted to think that a plot is not only a structure for the writer to arrange actions, but also a structure for the reader to organize the reading experience. A plot need not be the sole or even the major resource for the interpretation of meaning. However, mesmerized by the power of genre, the reader's imagination is expanded by the expectation of a story. What we read in "Ligeia" has in one way or another to connect to the scope anticipated by the expectation of a plot line. Without the connection to the Ligeia-Rowena-Ligeia story, for instance, these allegories, historical references and myths would not impact on the reader's mind with the strength they now have. Jan Mukarovsky suggests that plot should no longer be considered a matter of architecture, the proportions and the successions of parts, "but of the organization of the semantic aspect of the work" (138). However, as mentioned above, it is genre rather than language that defines literature as literature. To analyze plot and plotting on the level of semantics actually neglects the structuring function of genre that turns language into literature.

Poe's tales belong to the literature written before the so-called modern period. In modern literature, the attitude toward the function of plot in narrative went through a significant and complicated change. It is not uncommon today to find a writer trying to treat a plot merely as a framework of time instead of a scheme that can show the causality with the flux of time. However, the majority of fiction contemporary still consists of plotted stories. Even in reading the novels of such writers as James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov

and Thomas Pynchon, we still find that they either stress certain aspects of the plotting scheme that have already taken their cues from narratives like "Ligeia," or depend on readers to organize the fragmentary verbal expressions into a whole piece in accordance with their notions about what a narrative should be. The reason for this, I believe, partly lies in the notion of genre. Plot is a property readers generally attribute to the genre of narrative. It is an expectation based on the practice of over thousand years. This is particularly true in the West. To change the habit of appreciation is a process whose justification needs to be proven over a long course of time. In the meanwhile, to explore the potentialities of a plot may be a better idea than to abandon plotting entirely.

Fragmentarity and the Perceiving of a Narrative: Liu E's The Travels of Laocan

Fragmentarity is rather a philosophical concept. It underlies the quality of episodicity in narrative as well as the reader's perception of narrative. In other words, episodicity is a manifestation of fragmentarity in narratives. To start this section, I shall concentrate on the concept of fragmentarity instead of episodicity. There are two reasons for doing so. First, expounding on the concept of fragmentarity is a way to expose the deeper layer of the episodic quality in relevant texts; second, the concept of fragmentarity is related not only to a certain quality in the text, but also to the

reader's habit in receiving the text.

Fragmentarity is a concept different from that of fragmentation. Related to the discussion of text, fragmentation refers to the act of breaking the textual coherence into fragments. It implies both an intent to do so and the abnormality of breaking the expected logic that traditionally unifies an artistic work. Fragmentarity, on the other hand, describes a state of being detached. The unifying force is not supposed to be found within the text in the first place. It evokes no expectation that there should be an arrangement to organize the text coherently. On the contrary, it implies that the coherence of the perception hinges on the process of perceiving. If we may say that fragmentation is a major drive of modern literature in the West in opposing the traditional way of exercising the power of literature, then, we may identify fragmentarity with a major mode of artistic creation in Chinese literature. Fragmentation, by and large, is experimentation. Fragmentarity, on the other side, is a mature way to cope with the communication between the mind and the world. The possible connection between fragmentation and fragmentarity is not the issue I intend to discuss here. In this section, I will examine the function of fragmentarity exerts on the reader's mind in perceiving a narrative.

While pointing out the "limitations" of traditional Chinese fiction in its fulfillment of the premises and achievements of European fiction, John Bishop asserts that Chinese fiction lacks the integrations between style and content, and between forms and function (240). "Probably the most notable influence of its early origins on the novel and one most disturbing to the Western reader," Bishop claims, "is the heterogeneous and episodic quality of plot." Of these "accretive novels," "the structure of their plots is marked by

episodic variety, bound by a tenuous unity of historical or pseudo-historical theme" (242). Bishop concedes that the procedure he follows is "taking arbitrarily the fiction of the West as a standard against which to measure works in a wholly unrelated literature" (237). He assumes the superiority of the Western model of fiction and considers the Chinese model to be "primitive narrative conventions" (240). Beneath this overt bias is actually ignorance of the other pattern of narrative. Instead of the "limitations" of a particular literature in and of itself, what hinders an understanding of the literature, more often than not, are the limits of the perspective from which one examines the literature. The "episodic quality of plot" is a characteristic of the novel in China. It is a cherished model based on the aesthetic principle of fragmentarity.

The episodic quality of plot acts upon the reader's expectation of what a novel should be. In other words, the notion of the genre paves the way for the reader to unify the episodes in perceiving them. In discussing plot structures in late Qing novels, Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova proposes that the interpretive model formulated by Russian formalist Viktor Sklovskij may provide a ground for both Western novels (especially the European pre-eighteenth-century novel) and Chinese novels to receive a fair treatment, which she calls the pattern of string (40). According to this pattern, the string-like plot of a novel contains four kinds of narrative events: the episodes of the protagonist's story (the string), the story of a secondary protagonist, the sequence of the anecdotes of other characters, and the reflections and contemplations on philosophical social and moral themes in a belletristic form (40-41). Given the semantic unity in the combined effect of these four planes,

"the supposedly chaotic and disconnected quality of plot structure is only superficial" (48). Thus, the unifying principle "has to be a semantic principle" (49). This typology of plot actually shifts our attention from the making of a novel to the making of a verbal expression (a composition).[70] It makes room for the interplay of the plot of a story and the semantic structure of the text. In Chinese literary theory, to narrate a story (敘事) and to compose a text (作文章) are indeed different concepts. However, in a novel, both of them are subject to the controlling drive of making a novel (作小說). In order to integrate the seemingly disconnected episodes into a unified narrative, the interplay of plot structure and semantic structure has to be somehow connected to the reader's expectation of narrative as the genre.[71]

[70] This is also the way in which some Chinese critics search for the unifying force of a novel. A outstanding example is Mao Zonggang's commentaries on the Three Kingdoms. He declares that the novel is "a most remarkable example of literary composition" (162), talking about a particularly excellent way of composing the novel, such as the substructures within the general structure (164); the narrative technique of tracing things to their roots and divulging their sources (165); the technique of using the minor plot (the guest) as a foil for the major plot (the host, 166); the interplay of consecutive and nonconsecutive treatments(178); and the art of narrative analogous to the technique of sowing seeds a year in advance and making preliminary moves to set up later strategies (183), etc. "All these narrative strands," Mao maintains, "are interwoven so skillfully that no sooner does one of them begin than another is concluded and before it is concluded, yet another one begins" (165).

[71] The notion of the "semantic principle" is somehow not defined accurately. For instance, in the description of what she considers "a typical story of the major late Qing novels," Dolezelova-Velingerova concludes, "Its semantic pattern can be summarized as 'evil always defeats good' and 'the greater evil defeats a minor one,' where 'evil' is represented either by a character or by history" (53). This is actually a thematic rather then a semantic pattern. The stereotypical interpretation of the late Qing novels hinders a consideration of the interplay of plot structure and semantic structure.

Rooted in the particular culture, the generic notion of narrative in the Chinese tradition gives the reader a specific assist to maintain the wholeness of a narrative while confronting the episodic quality of plot.

In ancient China story was already considered to be a basic unit of verbal expression. To tell a story to express oneself is analogous to composing a phrase or sentence to convey the intended meaning with accuracy. Philosophical essays, such as that in *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects), *Mengzi* 孟子, *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, are full of stories, no matter to which school the writer belongs. The major portions of history books, especially *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Spring and Autumn Annals with Zuo Commentary) and *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian), are made up of stories. To explain the reason that he wrote the official history in the form of stories, Sima Qian (司馬遷 , ca. 145-90 B.C.) in his Postface to Records of the Historian cites a principle postulated by Confucius. According to Sima Qian, Confucius said, "I could rely on empty words, however, if I show it through incidents of action, then, it would show itself in a more profound and manifest way" (10: 3297). Telling a story is just a way of communication. What makes a novel different from other types of stories is the way in which the stories are told.

The Chinese translation of the term "fiction" is *xiao shuo* 小說. Its literal meaning, as we have seen in Chapter 1, is "small talk." There is a missing connotation if we understand *xiao shuo* 小說 simply in the way we understand the term "fiction" in English. The emphasis on the genre of *xiao shuo* 小說 is its smallness rather than its fictivity. The smallness of *xiao shuo* 小說 has a twofold implication. One is triviality; the other is insignificance. They are both related to the subject matter of *xiao shuo* 小說. Chinese critics always define the genre of *xiao shuo*小說 in its comparison

with the genre of history and Confucian or other philosophical-ethical-political teachings. The genre of *xiao shuo* 小說 circumscribes a territory in which writers can deal with a particular kind of episodes. These episodes, in the traditional diagram, are either trivial incidents that are unable to show the grand scheme as history books supposedly do, or strange stories that lack the profundity required for philosophical-ethical-political teachings. Whether the episodes are fictional or factual is not the determining point. Sima Qian declares that the stories he wrote are all events which actually happened. In doing so, he tells us that he intends to follow Confucius's example, to demonstrate the way of ruling and define the principle of human affairs (上明三王之道，下辨人事之紀 , 10:3299, 3297). On the contrary, as Yuan Jiong 袁褧 observes in his Preface to *Shishuo Xinyu* 世說新語 (A New Account of Tales of the World), unlike history books, the quality of *xiao shuo* 小說 does not depend on its capability of showing the grand historical scheme (Liu Yiqing 931).

This notion of *xiao shuo* 小說 liberates writers from the burden of plotting the story in order to show what should happen through what has happened. The coincidence of temporality and causality, which is a bedrock of our notion of plotting, is thus not a major concern for Chinese fiction writers. The writers record or invent stories based on their own interests rather than the significance of the narrated events in their relation to other events. In their craft, they concentrate on the vividness of the characters' personalities and the other aspects that aroused their personal interests in individual stories. The logic of the story line is subject to the need to attract readers in the same way as it affects the writer. This center of personal interest in the

creation of fiction is particularly manifested in the full development of a sub-genre: *biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說 (fictions in the style of a sketch). In the works such as Duan Chengshi's 段成式 (803-863) *Youyan Zazu* 酉陽雜俎 and Ji Yun's 紀昀 (1724-1805) *Yuewei Caotang Biji* 閱微草堂筆記, the reason that these short pieces have been collected into a relatively independent work is simply the author. The integration of the author's personal interest in the individual pieces is the sanction for the reader to conceive the whole book in a unified way.

The way of writing *xiao shuo* of short length 短篇小說 also impinges on the making of the novel (the long-length *xiao Shuo* 長篇 小說). The impact has been shown mainly at two points. The first is the elaboration on the individuality of the stories that are the parts of the novel. A novel is comprised of a series of stories. Each of these stories has two functions: to appeal to the reader as an individual story, and to contribute to the general plot of the novel (mainly in the way of describing the actions of a group of characters who are the protagonists of the whole novel). Even within the frame of a novel, for those sub-stories, being a good individual story (the link to the reader) is much more emphasized than being a good part of the general story (the link to the plot). The second point emphasizes the reading process rather than the textual arrangement in formulating the unity of the novel. Since each story in a novel affects the reader's mind not only as a part of the plot but also as a relatively independent unit, in conceiving each individual sub-story, the reader accordingly has a thematic understanding of this particular story, accompanied by an emotional mood as part of the reaction to the reading. When the reading moves forward, the thematic understanding and the emotional mood accumulate. Besides the relationship of the sub-stories

to the plot which is embodied in the textual arrangement, the connections among these pieces of thematic understanding and emotional mood is the other binding that gives coherence to perceiving the novel. The understanding of and reaction to each sub-story acts as a device in the reader's consciousness. Along with the unity shepherded by the development of the plot, the meshing of the multiple understandings and reactions on the reader's part can generate another sense of unity. In the major Chinese novels, there is normally a tension between the effort to elicit the unified thematic and emotional reaction and the effort to set forth a generally coherent story line. Sometimes (as we will see below), the author purposely breaks up the story line to lead readers' attention back to their own minds. For an outsider, these two particularities (the elaboration on the individuality of constituent stories and the emphasis on the reading process) may indeed evoke an impression of the "episodic quality of plot."

These two characteristics of making the novel are also bolstered by the theoretical understanding of the arts. Both have their liaison with other modes of artistic experiences. According to Chinese aesthetics, the seeming lack of connection among relatively self-sustained fragments in a text is both an inevitable result of the inadequacy of language, and a means to inspire the reader to reach a unified comprehension of the artistic work through the process of perceiving. Confucius says, "It is enough for a verbal expression to convey its meaning" (32). Zhuang Zi argues, "The quintessence of language is its meaning, but there is something that accompanies the meaning. The thing that accompanies meaning cannot be conveyed by verbal expressions" (2: 488). He maintains, "only if you know its inadequacy do you get to know its

usage" (4: 936). The way to reach the meaning beyond language, as Chinese writers and critics persistently point out, is to elaborate some particular scenes, characters or incidents with artistic mastery, and leave some space for the reader's imagination to complete the whole picture. It is a prevalent belief that a unique insight is generated through the process of comprehension rather than delivered through a fixed product.

Even mimetic novelists need to choose their materials. In this case, what determines the choice, however, is the need to complete the realistic description. In the Chinese novel, besides the logic underlying the development of incidents, the author's personal interest and the reader's reaction are two far more significant factors in choosing the focus of narration. In talking about models of perceiving art, Morse Peckham makes an interesting remark. Peckham writes, a Western man places a piece of driftwood upon a mantel, because he considers the object a work of art against the cultivated notion of aesthetic value: " he *perceived* it as a work of art." In contrast, when Chinese artists place interesting rocks in their gardens, "they were works of art as soon as they *decided* that they were" (87, the italics are mine). In the making of the novel, this spontaneity certainly has its share in the fabrication of the artistic model that appears in the form of fragmentarity.

In the following discussion, I will discuss the aforesaid points as exemplified in Liu E's 劉鶚 (1857-1909)) *Laocan Youji* 老殘遊記 (The Travels of Laocan, hereafter referred to as The Travels).

Liu E started writing The Travels[72] in 1903. It first appeared in

[72] The Travels I discuss here is the twenty-chapter edition. It is a complete work. There are nine recovered chapters of the incomplete sequential part (二編) and one chapter of the unpublished supplementary part (外編). As Wei Shaochang (魏紹昌) observes, they have never appeared as a part of a

serialization. This is his only novel. Liu E is one of the authors who were acquainted with Western novels but still write in the traditional Chinese way. In Chinese literature "travels" (*youji* 遊記) is a special form of the novel. One of the well-known examples is *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (The Journey to the West). This type of novel normally has as a protagonist of an adventurer or a wandering traveler whose journey serves as the central line of structuring. When *youji* 遊記 appears as a form of the novel, it is not an actual account of some imaginative stories the traveler has collected, but an imaginary account of the stories in which the traveler is actually a participant.

The looseness of the structure is a characteristic critics have commonly attributed to The Travels. For instance, C. T. Hsia notices that the structure of the novel is "rambling" and the author is apparently "unconcern with plot." However, Hsia maintains that this lack of unity "may have been deliberate rather than due to clumsiness or carelessness." It rather indicates Liu E's "dissatisfaction with the plot-centered of his predecessors and his ambition to encompass the higher and more complex kinds of unity consonant with a faithful rendering of his personal vision of China." Since the unifying power that overcomes the looseness of the novel is the "implementation of individual vision," this novel can even be considered to be a "Chinese lyrical novel" (Exploration 40-41). In his Introduction to The Travels, Harold Shadick, the translator of the English version, observes that "judged by the Western conception of a novel, the book lacks unity both of plot and subject matter." However, it has "a unity of feeling produced by the author's tireless interest in people and things, his moral integrity, and his pervading sense of humor"

complete work (1). Since my focus is on the way of unifying the novel, there is no reason to include them in the discussion.

(xxi). Thus, instead of the text itself the sense of unity is still rooted in the integration of the author's personality. Donald Holoch admits that due to its "episodic nature and diversity of styles," The Travels is "not novel but rather an anthology" (130). He postulates that in this novel, "the source of unity is the fusion of lyrical procedure and concept elaboration, the allegorical method in a word." In this allegory, "scenes which, once their emblematic nature is discovered, instruct us in interpreting the persons and events that follow" (145). If, as Holoch suggests, the structuring power of the novel is allegorical, then the reader's unified perception of the novel is constrained by the ability to read things in the novel as what they are not, as the basic definition of allegory is to say one thing but mean another. This interpretive strategy shifts the emphasis from the author to the reader. However, the descriptions of scenery, music and scenes in this novel are quite famous for their literary values. Whether we should read them as allegories, or, as Lu Xun does, see the author's faith and aspirations "along with" the excellent descriptions of scenes and incidents (敘景狀物，時有可觀，作者信仰，　併見其內, 9:443), is a question crucial to our interpretation of the novel.

The lack of concern with the general plot is a characteristic not exclusive to The Travels. In most Chinese novels, besides leading the reader's imagination through the time flux, instead of delivering a plotted scheme, the general plot functions as a reminder to prompt the reader to search for a unified theme in the sub-stories which are plot-connected and enclosed in the same text. This practice has cultivated an ingrained notion of the novel. Readers are generally not troubled by the looseness of the plotting structure, as their participation is anyway expected for reaching a unified perception of

the novel. In The Travels even such a general plot does not exist. In the novel what assumes the functions of a plot is the traveling experience of the hero Laocan. In the opening of the novel, there are a short incident of Laocan's magic treatment of Huang Ruihe's incurable disease, which is an allegorical illustration of Laocan's ability to solve the thorny problem of the Yellow River;[73] a dream, which is both a thrilling story and an allegory for the situation of China in that particular time;[74] an inspiring description of the attraction of scenery at the side of Lake Ming, and a fascinating account of the celestial excellence of the music performed by the girl Bainiu, which are famous for their literary quality; and another incident of Laocan's treatment of a patient, which again shows Laocan's real ability hidden behind his modest appearance. Then, the novel moves to a series of heard stories, exposing the cruelty of the prefect Yu Xian (玉賢). This is a fictional figure who actually insinuates a contemporary official by the name of Yu Xian (毓賢).[75] In order to protect people from Yu Xian's cruel and self-righteous ruling, Shen Dongzao sends his brother Shen Ziping to the Peach Blossom Mountain to invite Liu Renfu, a man capable of carrying out the scheme and recommended by Laocan. At this point, Laocan stays in Dongchang and Shen Ziping takes the role of traveler. Shen Ziping is the host of the next four chapters (8-11). The content of these chapters is crucial to the understanding of the author's intention but rather irrelevant to the plot. Shen Ziping spends one night at

[73] Liu E purposefully chose Yu (禹), the legendary ancestor who found a solution to the disastrous flood in the history of China, as the source of Laocan's prescription, and played the pun of the patient's name ("huang rui he" is the pronunciation of his name, and "huang he" is the pronunciation of the Yellow River).

[74] See Hu Shi's Preface to the novel (3: 535).

[75] See Hsia's discussion ("Exploration" 50-51).

the girl Yu Gu's home, being touched by the harmony of the nature and fascinated by the wisdom of the discussion of Yu Ku and Mr. Yellow Dragon on metaphysics, politics and ethics. After Shen Ziping has found Liu Renfu, Laocan resumes the role as the leading figure of the novel. He is stuck in a hotel in Qihe County because the river is half frozen, and runs into an acquaintance Huang Renrui. They have dinner together in the company of two call-girls: Cui Hua and Cui Huan, who are victims of the Yellow River flood. Their overnight talk leads readers to two other sub-stories of the novel. One is the story told by the girls about the flood which was rather caused by the government's strategy to control the Yellow River than the river itself. This story not only exposes the societal situation in this part of China, but also gives Laocan a chance to exhibit his chivalrous spirit and save the girls from being prostitutes. The other story is about a miscarried murder trial in which a self-righteous official Gang Bi 剛弼 frames innocent people to demonstrate his own righteousness.[76] In participating in the fight against the injustice, Laocan turns himself from a passive observer into an active actor in the story. This story virtually steers the reader into the story of the last two chapters, in which Laocan plays a private detective. This is another chance for him to exhibit the spirit of chivalry directly.[77] The novel concludes with a happy ending. Indeed, the plotting of the novel does not provide the reader with a unifying structure to organize the reading experience. In other words, these

[76] This official is another figure by which the author attacks a living official 剛毅. See Hsia's discussion (Exploration 51).

[77] Hsia maintains, "As a new kind of novel in the form of a journal, then, The Travels of Lao Ts'un is weakest in the well-plotted last two chapter . . . in adopting a conventional plot to wind up his novel, he has destroyed the unity of a journal so ably maintained in the earlier chapters" (Exploration 44).

sub-stories and descriptive passages are only fragments unless one can find another element to unify them.

The author is of course a unifying element to call upon. The Travels certainly has within it a living Liu E. It translates his personal experience, emotion and opinion into a narrative. To speak only of two major things in the novel: the Yellow River flood and the cruelty of the self-righteous officials, Liu E himself was an adviser to the Governer Zhang Yao 張曜 on flood control (1890) and he was personally accused of treason by Gang Yi 剛毅, the historical figure attacked by the fictional figure Gang Bi 剛弼 through innuendo. The novel has the stock of shelves on which we may find the author's personal attitude toward revolutions and the integration of Western civilization into Chinese tradition, his concern with the future of the nation and the suffering of her people, his doctrines of philosophy and politics, and his emotions and wit, etc. However, as we have observed above, when the author's experience has been turned into a work of narrative, the narrative detaches itself from the author to a certain extent. If the conceived wholeness of a novel is indeed rooted in the integration of the author's personality, the connection of every sub-story or descriptive passage to the author would be stronger than that among stories and passages as components of the novel. They are still fragments if we read the novel as a text. In other words, the integration of the author's personality cannot guarantee the wholeness of the novel. If The Travels is a "lyrical" work, as Hsia proposes, we would have every reason to seek the coherence in the author's presence. For a lyrical work is supposedly an expression of the author's emotional mood. Nevertheless, if we intend to read the work as a novel, we need to reverse the procedure. In other words, in order to know the integration of the author's

personality, first of all, we need to grasp the self-sustained wholeness of the novel for a start.

When The Travels was first serialized in the Magazine *Xiuxiang Xiaoshuo* 繡像小說 (Illustrated Fiction Magazine) and *Tianjin Riri Xinwen* 天津日日新聞 (The Tianjin Daily News), the installments of the first seventeen chapters (except Chapter 10 and 12) were appended with commentaries made by the author himself. In these commentaries, Liu E states his notion of the novel and the intended way of composing his novel. The novel, Liu E observes, functions as a genre supplementary to history (*yie shi* 野史). It records events and teaches the reader a lesson, but differentiates itself from history on two counts. First, as commonly acknowledged, he maintains that fiction can pick up what history book has left out. He writes, "the function of the supplementary history is to compensate the negligence of the official history. The names may be fictitious, but the things should have their roots in reality" (156).[78] However, there is a crucial point that differentiates him from other novelists or critics. In his opinion, the reason that historians neglected the materials which he included in the novel is not the triviality or insignificance of the materials, but the limits of the historical perspective, for instance, the way of viewing the behaviors of the so-called upright officials (*qing guan*清官) such as Yu Xuan and Gang Yi. Liu E claims that what this novel has recorded could be the materials for the official history in the future (regardless of their fictivity?), and this is the function of the novel (58). Since the perspective in which he narrates the incidents is dramatically different from the current viewpoint, at the very beginning of the novel, he

[78] Although the translations here are all mine, I have read Harold Shadick's translation several times with great admiration.

acknowledges the difference by hinting that this book is an immortal's interpretation of the mundane world (11).

The second reason that the novel is different from history, Liu E implies, is that a novelist tries to convey the essence or spirit (*shen* 神), while a historian endeavors to record facts in the way just as they appeared. In this respect, Liu E believes that fiction is hierarchically higher than painting and that his work is even better than Shi Naian's 施耐庵 *Shuihu Zhuan* 水滸傳 (The Water Margin. 95). Liu E has an overt intent to compare the composition of his novel with the art of music. Like the music performed by the girl Bainiu which has reached the acme of humanly possible melodies, Liu E claims that his novel is the acme of the art of writing. There is indeed an analogy between the principle on which Liu E has composed his novel and the principle Liu E conceives as the rationale for the success of music. Both of them are based on the philosophy elucidated in *Yi Jing* 易經 (Book of Changes, also transliterated as *I Ching*).

Given these two different emphases: to transcend the historian's perspective and to convey the *shen* 神 (essence or spirit), instead of the linear structure that corresponds to the time-sequence of actions, a novel should have a way of narration different from the way in which history books record events. From the discussions between the mysterious girl Yu Gu and Mr. Yellow Dragon in Chapter 9, 10 and 11, we know that Liu E is a believer in the doctrines of the *Yi Jing* 易經 (Book of Changes), He considers the principles of this classic work to be the foundation for the integration of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, and the foundation for the integration of the Chinese culture and the Western culture. In this novel, we can also see his

effort to follow the *Yi Jing* 易經 in composing the narrative. According to *Yi Jing* 易經, Confucius says, "Isn't the one who knows what the *shen* 神 (essence or spirit) has done the one who knows the principle of changes?" (*Zhou Yi* 周易 , 42).[79] The principle of changes, also according to *Yi Jing* 易經, is to reach the wholeness through the interaction between two opposite elements, especially between the negative (*fu* 負) and the positive (*zheng* 正). Harmony is rather a process in which conflicting elements find their places by countering one anther, than a static state in which the blended elements do not have their own identities. This philosophy has certainly reflected itself in the creation of Chinese literature and arts. Writers and artists arrange the parts of their works in a way that the reader will find the interactions among them and thereby grasp the *shen* 神 (essence or spirit) of the works. In his description of the music performed by Yu Gu and Mr. Yellow Dragon, Liu E writes, "when he (Shen Ziping) first heard it, the twanging of lute and striking of zither each made its own tune; but after listening carefully, he heard a pair of pearl birds singing in harmony, calling and answering each other" (108). When Yu Gu explains the essence of the music's supremacy, she says, it is the principle of "being harmonized but not being assimilated" (相協而不相同 , 109). Likewise, in The Travels the appearance of fragmentarity is expected to be balanced by the interaction which the reader is supposed to perceive among the separated incidents to reach the *shen* 神 (essence or spirit) of the novel.

In his own preface to the novel, Liu E maintains that this novel is a cry in the form of not crying, a tearless weeping, a soundless wail (1-2). As a part of this not-crying, in Chapter 12, he lets the hero Laocan shed his tears over

[79] 知變化之道者，其知神之所為乎？

the future of the country.

> "Now the country is indeed at the crucial time when many things are happening to it, and the nobles and officials are only scared of bringing punishment on themselves," Laocan thought to himself, "they think it is better to do nothing than to risk doing something. All things therefore are left unmanaged. How will the problems be solved in the future? The country is in such a state, how can a conscientious man (丈夫) accomplish his aspiration and establish his family?" When he reached this point of his thinking, the tears began to trickle down *unknowingly*. He thus had no heart left for the enjoyment of the scenery, and went back to the inn slowly. (135, my italics)

These are Laocan's only tears in the text. It is the point where the emotion of the writer merges into the emotion of the protagonist and where the bond of the authorial-constraint is broken. What stirs the surge of the emotion that breaks the bond is the concern for the future of the country. This future of the country, in the conviction solidly held by the Confucian intelligentsia, is the hope for one's personal fate. This outbreak of the sustained emotion leads us back to what Liu E says in the preface. He writes, "the deeper one's emotions are, the more profound one's crying is." He also emphasizes that human emotions are closely related to one's personal life, family, country, society, nationality and religion (2). The anxiety about the nation's future is the major motif of the novel. And the way of showing it is also a way of showing how a narrative may incite a unified perception through the seemingly fragmentary sub-stories and descriptive passages.

The sub-stories in The Travels are narratives in two ways. They

themselves are rather individual stories, and they function as components of a narrative of a broader scheme. As expected of the genre of narrative, fictions in particular, each story is supposed to be entertaining by itself, and has its impact on the reader's morality through entertaining. The whole novel is organized around the crux of Laocan's traveling. However, intrinsically, it is also fabricated through the connections of the moral lessons the reader may draw from the sub-stories. Therefore, in order to obtain the panoramic view of the macrocosm, one first of all needs to apprehend the particularities of the microcosm. This is an important generic feature of the Chinese novel. Sub-stories function as individual stories before they serve the whole novel as its constituent parts.[80] In the first chapter of The Travels, the reader may indeed enjoy the two incidents (Laocan's treatment of the patient Huang Ruihe's annual disease, and his dream in which he and his friends are trying to save a sinking ship) as good stories without knowing their allegorical implications (the problems of controlling the Yellow River, and the collapsing empire and the increasing anarchy).

Even if we read the incident in which Laocan has cured Huang Ruihe's mysterious disease that occurred annually[81] merely as a story, the message is still clear. The problem is not the severity of the disease, but the lack of an able man who is equipped with the indigenous wisdom. This is not merely a medical problem. Liu E makes his hero a traveler, shaking a string of bells and filling his bowl of gruel by curing diseases. It is not only because he himself failed to be a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine. There is a more

[80] Based on my own experience, I believe that to observe this characteristic of the Chinese novel is a key to the success of teaching Chinese novels to American students in introductory courses.

[81] The same as the flooding of the Yellow River.

significant consideration. In his comments on the first chapter, he remarks, "the whole world is sick and the whole world is sleeping." What one should and could do in this hopeless situation is to "shake the stringed bells to awake it first" (12). The problem exposed in the case of Huang Ruihe's disease is also the problem the novel tries to point out as the disease of the nation. The allegorical connection of this story to the problem of controlling the Yellow River's flooding strengthens the theme that an able man is the solution to the problem. The flood of the Yellow River is the mirror that reflects the country's problems. This is the reason that following the clue of the allegory in this very first sub-story, the novel yields two chapters (out of twenty) to the touching story of the girl Cui Huan 翠環. She has lost her family in a flood and is forced to be a prostitute in order to support her young brother. The lesson is the same. What causes the flood that swallows hundreds of thousands people in this case is not nature, but those administrators who follow a so-called genuis's bookish idea to abandon the dam in order to broaden the bed of the river. Thus, there is a hidden thematic line in the text that links the very first seemingly irrelevant incident to one of the major stories (which occurs 12 chapters later).

The second sub-story of Laocan and his friends' efforts to rescue the sinking ship functions in a similar way. This is a thrilling story. The narrator purposely keeps the reader in dark and does not reveal that it is actually a dream until the tension created by the plot has reached its peak. Since it is a dream, the story in the dream is supposedly plotted by Laocan's subconsciousness. The refraction caused by the medium of his psyche is a connector between what happened in the dream in this seemingly plot-

irrelevant story and what the hero is doing in the major plot. As in the first incident, in this sub-story we can find its thematic relevance even without referring to its allegorical implication. The story explicitly ridicules the idea that the future of China is in the hands of the revolutionaries, and exposes the blind xenophobia among the common people. In the first story, the reader is told that the remedy to the disease is to rejuvenate the indigenous wisdom; in this story Laocan tells his friends that the old way of piloting the ship is not wrong, the problem is the changing weather in which the captain has lost the sense of direction. What they need to do for saving the ship is simply to provide the captain with a compass. If we read this incident symbolically (not allegorically yet), the meaning of the Western-made compass is not difficult to decipher. First, it can provide direction for the people who have the vigor to move on but lack a sense of direction. Secondly, a compass is merely a tool. Thus, the image of a compass fits neatly into the maxim prevailing at Liu E's time among the intelligentsia. It says, "the Chinese learning is the essence; the Western learning is the tool" (中學為體，西學為用). Besides this symbolic meaning, as commonly agreed, Liu E intentionally describes the ship in the way to evoke the analogy between the ship and the state of the country, and thus uses it also as an allegory to consolidate the connection the reader may have already established between the dream and the theme of the whole novel.

In The Travels there are some elements that seem to belong to the genre of travels rather than that of the novel. These are the descriptions of music and of scenery. On the one hand, these are one of the reasons that The Travels is such a successful work in the first place. On the other hand, they seem to be incongruous in the scheme of plot. Thus, some critics simply skip these parts

while discussing the novel. These passages can hardly be interpreted as allegories; rather, they are perceptive descriptions of the beauty of music or scenery. What connect them to the general scheme of the novel are mainly the emotional moods they have created. For instance, in Chapter 2 there are at least two things in the description of the music performed by the girl Bainiu that may steer the reader's perception towards the general scheme of the novel. First, it serves as an index that spurs the reader's interest in the coming parts of the novel. The most attractive factor of the music in Laocan's perception is the beauty that transcends the audience's expectations. It comes after the listener has already concluded that the performer has reach the apex of harmony and exhausted the mystery of the sound. In the commentary attached to the serial installment of this chapter, Liu E explicitly makes an analogy between the excellence of Bainiu's music and that of his novel, setting afoot an expectation in the reader's mind of the rest parts of the novel coming after what has already been good in the first two chapters. The second stimulant is the appreciation of the native culture. This is one of the reasons for the hero's patriotism. The passion for the Chinese culture is a consistent emotion the narrator intends to bring forth through the travels of Laocan.[82] Laocan's intoxication with the harmony between the human heart and the music played by those simple instruments, his craving for the ancient editions of the classics, his admiration for the indigenous creativity exhibited in the local products such as the pearl lamps Shen Ziping sees in Yu Gu's home, are all part of the hero's personality.[83]

[82] Liu E himself is a pioneering collector of the inscribed oracle bones of the Sang period, and has published the *Tieyun Canggui* 鐵雲藏龜 (Tortoise Shells in the Collection of Liu E), that, as Shadick puts it, is "the first book of reproductions of these inscriptions ever made" (xiv).

The descriptions of scenery also have their intonations contributing to the making of the novel. The beauty of the landscape is one of the reasons that Laocan travels. It is also one of the reasons for his love for the land he is traveling. The sympathy he feels between humans and nature makes him particularly hate the undue intervention of human imposition, even if the imposition is conducted in the name of good will. The beauty of the scenery that brings him to the verge of crying on the bank of the Yellow River is a vivid contrast to the disaster caused by the flood of the River. The distaste results from an effort against the course of nature. To a certain extent, the distaste for human imposition is the reason that in the novel Liu E has particularly chosen the so-called genius (*cai zi*才子) and upright officials (*qing guan* 清官) as targets. Corruption is a major crime. However, the damage corrupt officials bring to the nation is not as crucial as the damage

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[83] Liu E even uses the allegory of a lamp to indicate that given the circumstance the Chinese philosophy he believes in could be the most enlightening doctrine in the world. Liu E was a pupil of Li Guangxi 李光昕 and both of them belonged to the school by the name of *Taigu* 太谷 (the given name of its founder Zhou Taigu 周太谷). This is a school that advocates the importance of action. Taigu 太谷 is also the name of a county in Sanxi Province. In the novel, the narrator describes a lamp by the name of *taigu* 太谷 lamp (because it was invented and produced in the country of Taigu 太谷). Then, he says, "the lamps made in this county are of good style and produce ample heat and plenty of light. They are the best in the whole world. It is a pity that this lamp was invented in China. If it were invented in any country in Europe or America, the inventor of the lamp would be praised in all the newspapers and the government would grant him a patent" (139). This is an allegory. In other words, what Liu E is saying here is that if the philosophy he is practicing had not been silenced in the environment in China, its significance would have been acknowledged with the same kind of enthusiasm his contemporaries has been showing in pursuit of Western philosophies.

caused by the officials who have violated the law of nature in the name of righteousness. The scattered descriptions of scenery expose this *shen* 神 (essence or spirit) to readers by distracting their attention from the plot line of the story.

In the Chinese tradition of reading a novel, the integrity of the hero's personality is more expected than the plotted logic of the sub-stories. More often than not, actions are arranged to reveal the characters' personalities instead of showing the sequence of the actions. The connections among sub-stories largely depend on the revelation of the character's personality. Without this center, some stories included in the novel are simply irrelevant to one another. In many novels, partly due to the lack of the continuity of actions, characters' personalities are rarely developed but gradually revealed. In The Travels, as observed above, what makes it a novel rather than travel book is the hero's personal involvement. In the novel, there are three types of Laocan's involvement: his emotional reaction to the stories told, his personal participation in the action, and his absence while Shen Ziping, Yu Gu and Mr. Yellow Dragon are discussing metaphysics, ethics, politics and arts on Peach Blossom Mountain. The interrelationship among these three types of the hero's personal involvement engenders an irony. This irony can hardly be captured by a lyrical work. Let us focus on the detective story of the last two chapters to see how it works.

In a discussion of the episode narrated in the last chapters of the novel, C. T. Hsia observes that these two well-plotted chapters are the weakest point of The Travels. He gives us two reasons. First, although detective fictions were fashionable at the time when Liu E was writing the novel, a detective story is

incongruous in the form of a journal that is "so ably maintained in the earlier chapters." Secondly, the detective story also damages the novel by the triviality of its significance: "the crime it uncovers is of a domestic and private character and has nothing to do with the theme of official injustice" (44). Hsia's observations are rather sharp. However, as we have already shown, Liu E's principle of composing the novel is to rely on the interaction of rather diverse parts in order to obtain the *shen* 神 (essence or spirit). In this light, the contrast of these two chapters to other parts of the novel and their triviality actually has a positive rather than negative impact on the whole effect of the novel. They are meant to engender an irony.

The detective story is a happy ending to the novel. This is a way to satisfy the reader's demand for entertainment. However, the problem solved by Laocan in his role of a detective, as Hsia points out, is merely related to the skirmish between two families. It is not the confrontation between the tyrannical use of power by the self-righted officials and the victim family as seen in previous chapters, which is the source of a deep sorrow. However, if we look into the happy ending in light of the contrast between the deep sorrow exhibited in the previous parts and the happiness carried by the ending, it is not difficult to conceive that this ending actually arouses doubt about the justification of happiness and thereby deconstructs itself. In other words, the structure of the novel makes this ending a self-deconstructing link in the work. It prompts the reader to circle back to the depth of the sorrow that is in contrast with the triviality of the happiness. The ending provides readers with an outlet to release partially their anger about the injustice, even though it has been done only through the punishment of a trivial member of its representatives. It also functions as a springboard from which readers may

jump back to the theme established in the previous parts. No matter whether or not readers are willing to go back to the previous stories, the effect caused by the contrast is always lurking in their minds. In the philosophy elucidated in the *Yi Jing* 易經 (Book of Changes), the path of development always appears in a spiral rather than linear form.

Another ironic implication originating from the triviality of the detective story is the sense of hopelessness. Laocan, the hero of the novel, is a man of wisdom, knowledge, honesty, conscience, independence and chivalry. However, from what we have learned about his feelings toward the people in the stories he heard and his personal involvement in the actions, there is apparently a conceivable discrepancy between what he thinks should be done and what he is actually able to do. In his mind, to learn things from the West and to remove the self-righteous officials who are abusing their power are crucial steps to rejuvenate Chinese civilization. Nevertheless, what he himself is able to do is only to play the role of a detective who can only solve trivial problems under the supervision of a friendly official. The bedrock of the system that is the reason for the problems has yet been touched. In this sense, this ending is not an artistic flaw, but a artistic device. It is an irony that steers the reader's attention back to the flaw in the society which Laocan has already exposed and tries to offer his own prescription in the previous chapters. This is also part of the reason that Liu E calls this novel a "cry." It is not only a cry of sorrow, but also a cry of hopelessness.

Laocan's personal involvement with the actions is also in contrast with his absence from the scene in which Yu Gu and Mr. Yellow Dragon discuss philosophy and the future of the nation with Shen Ziping. The description of

this episode is also an aberration of the normative form of the genre of journal, as the traveler yields his leading role to another character. Yu Gu and Mr. Yellow Dragon utter their opinions on many issues, including the the hermeneutics of Confucian classics, the predication of the nation's future, the revolutionaries in the South and the Boxer Rebellion in the North, the relationships between Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and their political implications, and the future of Chinese civilization which they believe will flourish again after its integration with Western culture. It is commonly agreed that these opinions are representative of Liu E's own thoughts. C. T. Hsia maintains that Laocan and Mr. Yellow Dragon each represents a part of Liu E's personality. The reason that Laocan has to be absent from the scene where Mr. Yellow Dragon is present is that "he [the author] did not want a confrontation of the two aspects of his self that are in unreconciled conflict" (53). This is certainly an interesting observation. However, if we do not see the novel as a manifestation of the author's personality, but as an object of contemplation, it would be reasonable to say that the ending of the novel is also a critique on Mr. Yellow Dragon's behavior. Mr. Dragon acts like a Taoist who indulges himself among the mountains and the water, and does nothing to improve people's lives and the nation's future, believing that everything would eventually come out alright under the law of nature. In contrast, although what Laocan has done is somewhat insignificant, at least he is trying to do something to better other people's lives. In contrast with the grandeur of the theories elucidated in the situation where Laocan is absent, the triviality of Laocan's accomplishment actually lays a course for the reader to go back to what Liu E says in the commentary on the very first chapter: the novel is a modest effort to shake the stringed bell to awake the people from their

ignorance. It is, after all, an effort but not a manifestation of speculation.

In the history of Chinese arts, compositions of artistic creations are particularly in the grip of the principles elucidated in Taoist doctrines. According to Taoist philosophy, for instance, non-being is a form of being and silence is a form of expression. Based on these principles, it is not hard to understand that in the composition of a novel, the form of fragmentarity is a way to achieve the effect of unification. It may not be a unification of formal structure, but it is certainly a unification that can convey the *shen* 神 (essence or spirit).

Epilogue

Stories are part of life. A story is not merely a form of representation, but also a form of creativity that transcends the limits set up by the gap between a observing subject and a observed object. Stories are an extension onto human experience. The impulse to tell a story is always parallel to the lack of rational power to explain the content of the story. "A story is only an outlet for frustrated aspirations," Persian writer Sadgh Hedayat remarks in The Blind Owl, "for aspirations which the story-teller conceives in accordance with a limited stock of spiritual resources inherited from previous generations" (67). A person who tells a story is haunted by the urge to give an explanation to things that are plain in trivial details but complicated in explanations. Great storytellers always precede great philosophers. A story brings many centers and interests into a fold. It possesses more power than any form of rational thinking in maintaining the acuteness of sensibility. To tell a story is not an attempt to stay away from sophisticated thinking. Instead, it is an exhibition of the intelligence that not only teaches people the ability to comprehend the world in a unique way, but also allows them to integrate their understanding of the world into the created version of the world. Narrative's advantage over other literary genres does not merely lie in its possible longer length. To say things in the form of story is more a matter of quality than quantity.

The force that holds the story together is too integral to be undone by

rationality or historical actuality. The interpretation of a story is a much-contested terrain. One can hardly state the full meaning of the seemingly causal sequences of events in a story by any other means of communication. After we have learned the way in which a story present the world, the world never appears the same. It becomes much more meaningful. Vladimir Nabokov informs us that the art of writing is the art of seeing the world as the potentiality of fiction, because the real writer "has no given values at his disposal" (Lectures on Literature 2). What allows the world to flicker and to fuse is the faculty of imagination. Imagination is the source of meaning; and text is an actualization of imagination. The model of narrative is a ready mode for transforming an impulse to tell a story into a text. The logic narrative practices is not entirely intelligible to the mind that works with judgmental analysis, rational equations, and pros and cons. In this sense, narrative's existence entails a denial. It defies the attempt to formulate certain methodologies equally valid to scientific and narratological researches. I see the elements presented in this thesis as "essentials" rather than "rules" of narrative. Instead of abstracting some general formulations to which every narrative can attest, I rather locate some central points to outline the pattern with which narratives work their way deep into our minds.

The universality of storytelling attests to its ineluctability. The stories of The Bible and of some Buddhist sutras are quite informative examples. How can these simple stories permanently possess such magic power? Is it possible that the ultimate truth of spirituality can only be uttered in narrative form, whether it be in the West or in the East? There is a congruity in the nature of narratives across the cultural boundaries that urges us to widen the scope of

research. The defense of the universality of narrative is in no way a defense of the universality of certain narrative patterns occurring in a particular literature. Narrative finds form and meaning in our experience, but establishes itself differently in different cultures. What grows from the comparison of two unlike appearances is the realization that in order to seize a likeness in understanding the nature of narrative, one needs to form a methodology different from traditional literary analyses. There have been some recent efforts to search for the rationale of the study of narrative per se. For instance, in Universal Grammar and Narrative Form (1995), David Herman proposes that since narrative is a "supralinguistic construct wider in scope than (the grammar of) any particular language," and since narrative discourse "mediates between the structures of language and the structures of the world," there should be a grammar of narrative universally applicable to all narrative forms, no matter what language they are written in (30-31). This is, obviously, a structural analysis, and structural analysis of texts is certainly a way to differentiate a literary genre from others. However, we know enough to question the validity of seeing textual structure as the sole source of the information a narrative can offer. In this dissertation I have tried to locate those elements which, both in the West and in the East, do not solely belong to narrative texts but nevertheless are essential for a text to function as a narrative. I call these elements the "essentials" of narrative. As the title indicates, this dissertation is also intended to be a synthesis. I use the term "synthesis" for two of its connotations. It indicates the intent to search for coherence by putting separate narrative experiences together; it also reminds readers that the postulates presented here are just as artificial and tentative as any chemical compound, waiting to be replaced by more sophisticated ones.

I believe that narrative is a discursive mode but is not itself a discourse. A narrative is composed by an author but is not simply the author's utterance. Through the medium of the narrator, a narrative sustains divergent voices and operates on the reader or listener's mind at a level conceptually higher than a directly-uttered discourse. A detached narrativizing voice is the essence of narrative. When he talks about his own experience in storytelling in his early twenties, Stephen Greenblatt describes this voice. He calls it a "compulsive and detached narrativizing voice." Story was the proper form for expressing what he was trying to say, but he himself could not be a proper narrator of the story. He says that he always felt the need to narrate his being in a voice other than his own. There was an unpleasantly ironic "he" that refused to let him see his own life entirely in the eye of the personal pronoun "I." The narrative impulse forced him to understand the uncanny otherness of his own voice, make it comprehensible, "and bring it under rational control by trying to understand the way in which all voices come to be woven out of strands of alien experience" (5). Writers need a detached narrator even in telling their personal experiences. Although precisely why this is so is not beyond all conjecture, as Greenblatt and others have testified, it is a necessity for a narrative. Moreover, in interpreting a narrative that describes the events from the author's direct experience, identifying the narrator with the author will only hold back the artistic effect and the cognitive dimension a narrative supposedly creates by playing on the distance between the author and the narrator. A narrative is a verbal expression in which the author communicates with readers through a created narrator. To deny the distance between the author and the narrator is to ignore the potential a narrative may

have both in telling the story and in the way of telling the story.

Creating the distance between the author and the narrator is crucial in turning a writer from a poet into a novelist. Writing a narrative is not merely using associative language to depict situations that represent human experiences and render them believable. It is, first of all, to create a "zone" (to borrow a term from Bakhtin) in which the author offers his or her understanding of the depicted situations in the way that readers can share it by acting as its counterpart. Between the author and the reader, the narrator functions as a negotiator. The rich experience an author can draw upon and the complexity of mind an author possesses are certainly prerequisites to intellectual and aesthetic accomplishments. However, they do not necessarily guarantee the profundity of a narrative the reader can conceive, There are some commonly acknowledged strategic and technical merits in narrative writing, such as an intricate but orderly structure, details of characterization, and imagery, symbolism and allusions. Besides these elements, there is a more profound reason for the success of a narrative. It is the way of positioning a narrator in the right place and granting him or her the power to perceive and sustain a subtlety. This subtlety may pave a new way for the reader to reach the philosophical and psychological complexity. Paul Ricoeur maintains, "the narrative theses reply to a diversifying and hierarchizing of the explanatory models with a comparable diversifying and hierarchizing of the explanatory resources of narrative" (Time and Narrative 1:179). The richness of these resources partially if not entirely lies in the detachment of the narrator from the author. One thing that makes narratology (in its general sense) different from poetics (in its narrow sense) is that it grants the narrator a position independent from that of both the author and the reader. This independence

is the base of the model that accommodates the need for diversification. To establish a narrator is to acknowledge a unique perspective. It is from this perspective that the narrator relates the story and the reader gains insight or wisdom to look into the narrated world.

Two issues are brought up immediately by the shift of the center from the author to the narrator: language and textualization. Both of these are related to the question prompted by the distance from the author: the autonomy of the narrative text. Whether language is able to signify the signified is certainly a question narrative study has to deal with. But, more urgently, concerning the issue of language narrative study also has to deal with the questions of how narrative as a special form enables language to carry out its function as a vehicle of human communication, and how language as the medium both enhances and restrains the narrative impulse through its formation. Language is not merely a means to signify the signified objects for communication. It is not merely a system of signs. Language is also a repertoire that stores people's reactions to the signified objects and their agreements on correspondences between the visible signs and invisible feelings and things. There are rules that govern the arrangement of the signs, which are the studying object of linguistics; there are also patterns that explain the correspondences between signs and things, which are the studying object of semantics. Related to language, narrative study focuses on the questions of why the development of language virtually leads to the birth of narrative, and what is the relationship between language in general and narrative as a special expression of language. My conclusion is: on the one hand, the form of narrative allows a greater latitude for the

elements of language in actualizing their potential dynamics. On the other hand, language as an institution engages every narrative impulse into the intellectual stratum of a given circumstance, granting a broader way for both the author and the reader to reach each other. The latter part of this relationship leads us directly to the issue of textualization.

To textualize is to transform a narrative impulse into a text. A narrative is a language entity written in a particular type of form. Both language and the generic form connect it to a larger world. To textualize is also to link a narrative to the extant world built within the accumulated texts. Writers always respond to the literary figures, allusions and themes that are already there when they start to write. Even if writers themselves do not realize the connections, readers will trace and the critics will reveal these connections anyway. Interpretations of a narrative do not necessarily meet the author's expectations, as between the author and the reader there is always a world of texts of which a particular author's work is an integral part. My discussion of narrative is based on the assumption that there is a world of texts which cannot be simplistically defined either by the concept of subjective or by that of objective.

The world of texts is a world in which human beings manage to maintain mental experiences in physical forms. It is incidental whether a text is composed in a language originated in alphabet or pictograph, or whether it is recorded in a storyteller's mind (such as in a primitive tribe), on bones, rocks, metals, silk and paper, or in computer. However, it is universal that texts emerge as a means to exceed the limits of the human body in expressing inner experience; and it is intrinsic that there are certain patterns (genres) in which texts are composed. Emory Elliott observes that "narrative--

storytelling--which forms an essential element of the 'novel,' began in every corner of the world at a very early point in the development of civilizations" (ix-x). To compose a story is to transform one's experience into a text; to compose a text in the genre (pattern) of narrative is the only way one can translate this particular type of experience into a physical form. The fact mentioned by Elliott implies that there must be some reason for the form of storytelling and for its omnipresent occurrence. This dissertation is an attempt to contribute an explanation. Storytellers are so absorbed by the patterns they adopt in telling stories that the praxis of storytelling frees itself from the limits of storytellers' personal lives and instead takes on the logic which governs the world of texts. In order to explain the nature of narrative, "text" and "genre" are apparently two concepts one has to deal with. This is why I have concentrated on these two concepts in the first chapter while discussing the nature of narrative, and devoted a whole chapter to the discussion of genre.

The word "text" in its Latin form *textus* means something woven, a tissue, version, style. In Chinese the counterpart word *wenzhang* 文章 has the same meaning. These two characters both means texture, pattern of tissue, and decorative or rhetorical style, while the first character *wen* 文 also means "words" and the second *zhang* 章 "a piece of composition." A continuous piece of writing has its textual closure; yet the textual closure is also a way to connect this particular piece of writing to other writings. On the one hand, the form (pattern) of the writing endows the text with a certain meaning by its relations to forms of the same kind. On the other hand, the strands woven in the text, such as political concerns, psychological anxiety,

emotional depth, and philosophical thought, are somehow entangled with the strands of other texts. I don't want to overstate this connection and to claim that being a text gives us a reason to disregard the author and reader of a narrative entirely; but, for the reasons mentioned here, being a text does give a narrative a certain autonomy apart from the author and the reader.

To say something in the form of narrative is a fact that speaks for itself. In Jane Hamilton's novel A Map of the World, Howard speculates about the difference between narrative and science. He thinks that in pre-Socratic times, the first scientists "figured out that if they were going to understand anything they would have to discard narrative in favor of empirical methods." In his opinion, "the Creation myths explained, after a fashion, who and why, but science would tell how and what" (173). This opinion may not be an accurate definition of the difference between narrative and science, but it reveals a truth about the necessity of genre. The correspondence between what is said and how to say it in a text is the essence of the concept of genre. Genre is the structure of as well as the gate to the world of texts. It is the tacit agreement between form and content, and provides both the author and the reader with a key to get into and out of the world of texts. In order to tap the power of a narrative, one has to be conversant with the generic features of narrative, even though different cultures most likely have diverse notions of certain generic features of narrative. The knowledge of genre is the insight, only through which is the reader able to read into a text.

Understanding the nature of narrative confers power over the interpretation of a narrative. Words reflect reality; the lexicon of language bears the imprint of a culture. However, narrative as the acquired form enhances these two functions to a level where both the theory of

representation and linguistics are no longer sufficient. The study of narrative, it seems to me, is meant to lay hold of a theory on which more light may dawn on the interpretations of narratives. This is what this dissertation is about. I began being fascinated by literature when I was a teenager and forced to live alone in a small village where I could read only after a long day labor and under the light of an oil lamp. For me literature is a gold mine. However, it is a mine that only opens itself up to the person who is equipped with adequate tools. Literary studies should provide readers with such tools. Comparisons of different literatures are particularly helpful in this respect. "Studies of this kind," Erich Auerbach wisely observes, "do not deal with laws but with trends and tendencies, which cross and complement one another in the most varied ways" (556). What I have presented in this dissertation is based on my experiences in reading narratives in different cultures. I hope the focus of comparison has indeed illustrated some elements essential to our understanding of narrative as a genre, whether the particular work is entitled Don Quixote or Dream of the Red Chamber.

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Chinese Language & Literature.

EXPERIENCE

1996-1997 Research Assistant, Chinese Literary Theory and Translation

1995-1996 Teaching Assistant, Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao.
(Confucianism, Taoism, Neo-Taoism, Buddhism & Neo-Confucianism.)

1994-1996 Teaching Assistant, Classic Masterpieces of Non-Western Cultures.
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1994-1996 Teaching Assistant, Modern Masterpieces of Non-Western Cultures.
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1994-1996 Teaching Assistant, English Composition (Composition II).

1991-1995 Teaching Assistant, the Chinese Language.

1986-1989 Director, the editorial section on the academic quarterly Essays on Chinese Literature, and History 中華文史論叢, the Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House (上海古籍出版社).

1982-1985 Editor, the Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House 上海古籍出版社.

LANGUAGES

Native fluency in Chinese (Mandarin and other two dialects).

Near-native fluency in English.

Strong competence in Classical Chinese.

Reading ability in Japanese and French.

PUBLICATIONS

The Poetry of Li Jing and Li Yu 南唐二主詞 (Shanghai: Guji 古籍, 1988).

"The Reformation of the Economy and the Rejuvenation of the National Culture," Sociological Investigation and Study 社會學調查與研究 (July 1985) 59-64.

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